

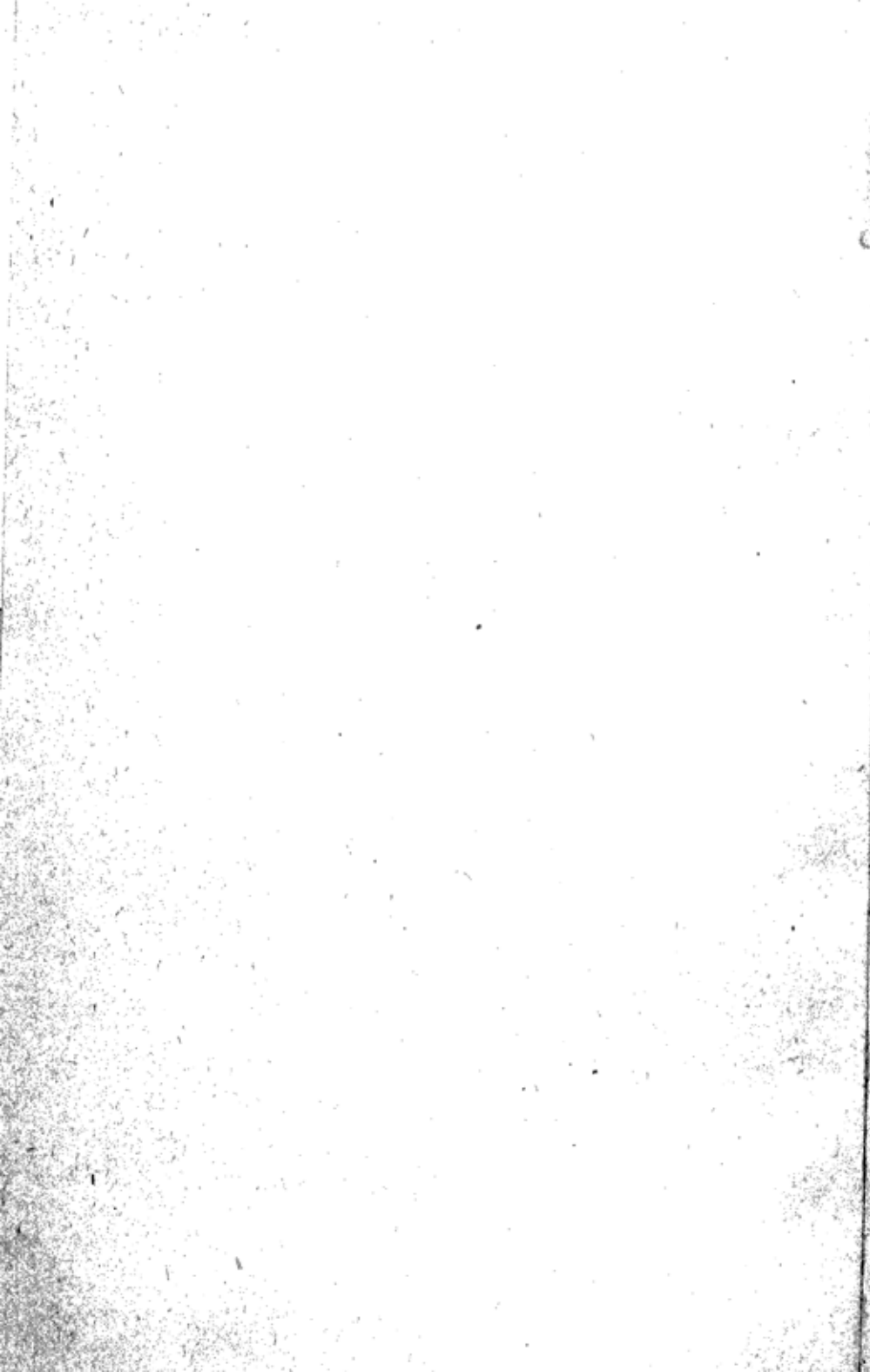
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THE FOLK-TALES OF THE GAROS

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University of Gauhati
Department of Tribal Culture and Folklore Research
Publication No. 4

THE FOLK-TALES OF THE GAROS



Compiled by
DEWAN SING RONGMUTHU, B. A. (Hons.)

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FOREWORD

The study of folk culture has attracted the attention of scholars as well as of a section of the reading public. An eagerness to know our neighbours and a desire to understand the ethos of a unit of culture, particularly of our tribal neighbours, have generated mutual respect and understanding through a proper study of their societies. The present set-up of a social group, its unique social structure, the intricacies of social, religious and moral norms can be properly understood only on the perspective of their past social and cultural life which are reflected on the orally transmitted traditions of a preliterate society. Hence the unique importance of study of folklore which embodies the treasured knowledge gleaned through hard but long experience.

The Department of Tribal Culture and Folklore Research of the University of Gauhati, Assam has initiated a scheme covering a study of tribal groups of inhabitants of both the Hills and the Plains areas of Assam by Research Scholars, supported by grants received from the State Government and the University Grants Commission. At present our projects cover only a few selected groups of Assam. It is hoped that we shall be in a position to undertake sociological study of all the hitherto-unknown groups of the North-Eastern part of our Republic, provided liberal grants from the sources mentioned above continue to flow as ever.

Sri Dewan Sing Rongmuthu, B. A. (Hons), the author of this volume, is himself a member of the Garo society which is well known for its matriarchal and uxorilocal type of social organization. Sri Rongmuthu has a scholarly bent of mind and he finds pleasure in devoting his leisure to recording the orally handed down items of culture of his own people. The State Government of Assam encouraged Sri Rongmuthu with a grant of money for his work. Besides, his work was forwarded by the Government of Assam for publication by this Department. Subsequently Sri Rongmuthu was appointed Research Scholar

id. from m/s. Rockline Book Centre, Delhi on 14.6.61 for Rs. 15/-

for six months during which period he checked up and corrected his material under the guidance of Sri M. C. Goswami, Head of the Department of Anthropology and Dr. N. S. Reddy.

Thanks are due to Dr. Maheswar Neog, who is in charge of the Department of Publication, Gauhati University, and to Srimati Preeti Barua and Sri Keshav Mahanta of the same Department, for their general interest and care in bringing out this volume.

It is hoped that the publication of this volume will fulfil a long-felt need of a handy book for those who are engaged in a comparative study of the folklore of the tribal people in particular and of folk culture in general. A companion volume from the same author awaits publication by this Department.

University of Gauhati
31st October 1960

B. K. BARUA,
Dean of the Faculty of Arts

PREFACE

What is the good of old tales in modern times ?

The folk literature presented in this volume has been gathered by the author from the lips of some of the members of the unlettered and unsophisticated hill people of Assam, who style themselves as the Achiks or Mandes but who are, however, known to the outsiders as Garos.

Like many of their sister races in India, the Garos possess extensive traditional accounts, mythology, fables and other forms of oral literature which have been handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Consequently, with the passing away of men and women of the previous generations with their old-fashioned manners, and with the advent of the gloss and glamour of modern civilization, such mythology, such traditional accounts, and fables are being imperceptibly relegated to the limbo of oblivion.

Their social, economic and religious systems are fast changing. In such a period of drift, a considerable number of these illiterate peasants living in the fastness of hills, still preserve the tribal heritage in mythology, traditional accounts, folklore, music and rural arts.

The processes, tragedies and beauties of nature form the motifs of innumerable stories. Garo nature myths seek to explain different phenomena, and they bear a marked resemblance to the fables of Greece and Rome. Many of these stories are intricately woven in the tangled web of the religious and social life and thought of these unschooled people. The author recalls in this context the saying of the Spanish Philosopher, George Santayana : "Religion is human experience interpreted by human imagination. Matters of religion should never be matters of controversy. We seek rather to honour the piety and understand the poetry embodied in these fables".

Some of the stories in this work attest in a remarkable way that something vital and living in the Garos has continued up

to this very day and that there is some urge driving the Garo in a direction not yet wholly realized.

The Garo land has a rich cultural heritage in music which reflects with great spontaneity and directness the life, the beauty and strength of the ancient Garo society. The genuine folk music, inherited from the great past, has both its grand and healthy aspects, revealing the wisdom and vitality of the people in fine and simple styles.

The Author's sincere aim in producing this work, is to preserve the traditional songs and the lore of the Garos before they completely pass into the oblivion.

The Author's infinite thanks are due to Shri Jairamdas Doulatram, the previous Governor of Assam, Shri I. Sashimeren Aier, M. A., Regional Assistant Commissioner for Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, Shillong, and to Shri S. M. L. Bhatnagar, the Deputy Commissioner, Garo Hills, Tura, but for whose active interest in the fast vanishing tribal cultures in Assam this work would have never seen the light of the day.

DEPARTMENT OF TRIBAL CULTURE
AND FOLKLORE RESEARCH,
GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

DEWANSINGH S. RONGMUTHU

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THE FOLK-TALES OF THE GAROS

THE ACHIK SCRIPT

Long, long ago the Achiks lived in a country known as Mandalae¹. There they dwelt in wonderfully expansive villages. They built huge high-storied houses for themselves and spacious temples for their gods and goddesses. The Achiks had their literature inscribed in their own script on rolls of parchment made from the skins of animals.

At that time the Achiks, who were also known as the KAROS, were wealthy and prosperous. They were civilized and cultured. They lived together under their own kings or chieftains. They had big, long *milams* (two-edged swords), spears, shields, bows and arrows, and *chandals* (matchlocks) all of their own make. They knew how to dig for ore and how to refine it for making implements of iron and steel. They knew the art of weaving fine and wonderful cloth with looms invented by themselves. They knew the truth of mental science as their speciality, which they learnt by heart; but had forgotten it in an evil moment of their history as recounted below.

One year a vast horde of wild men from the North suddenly attacked the Achiks. The latter offered stubborn resistance; but they were swiftly overpowered by force of the superior number of their enemies. These innumerable savages raided and set fire to the beautiful houses and picturesque villages of the Achiks, destroying their well-laid wonderful homesteads, their splendid temples, and much of their precious writings. They finally killed in cold blood many of the brave Achik people.

The survivors of the sudden onslaught, under the guidance of kings, migrated to the hills west of the Arurongdi River.² Another large contingent of Achiks settled in Asong Tibotgiri.³ These had in their possession precious rolls of parchment in which their history, religious practices, arts of warfare, esoteric practices, government and industry were written in Achik script.

In the course of time, the land in Tibotgiri on which the scattered Achiks had settled down became drier and drier. The cultivated soil yielded little return and gradually changed into arid wastes. Rainfall became scarce. Fields of rice, millet and corn became parched and seed could not germinate. Rice and cotton crops failed ; and famine and starvation stared the Achiks in the face. So they left ill-fated Tibotgiri and shifted onward in the direction of the setting sun.

On the way, while they were sojourning at Garwar Bri⁴, the food which they had with them was exhausted. The land where they now found themselves was hard, cold, and barren. The Achiks could not find food anywhere in the dreary wastes of snow surrounding them. The few snow-laden trees and shrubs that dotted the dismal landscape appeared like grim spectres. Many of the brave Achiks died in that place for lack of food. This place was called *Rupakhund*, meaning a Circle of Silvery White. The remainder in their state of dire starvation reluctantly boiled their precious scrolls of parchment and ate them up. In misery and confusion they forgot their most valuable esoteric knowledge. When they finally abandoned desolate Garwar Bri and proceeded down the hills, they discovered a fruitful country and settled there. They had a comparatively easy life in the lap of a kinder nature, which made them lazy, both physically and intellectually.

The first concern of the Achiks in their new settlement was food and shelter. So they laboured untiringly to procure these essential needs. Afterwards, when they had plenty of good food to eat and comfortable houses to live in, they recalled with chagrin the wonderful scrolls of parchment which they had been compelled to devour in their former sad plight. An insatiable desire to restore their lost writings took hold of the intrepid Achiks. They tried to reproduce them in their original beauty ; but they sadly discovered that they had totally forgotten their beloved script. Only the memory of their past art, history and experiences remained. From that time the Achiks have been an illiterate people.

Told by Santa Gabil at Village Singlimari,
District Darrang, Assam

SALARAM MITHDEICHAK

When a division of the Achiks were settling in a home-country, known as *Salaram Mithdeichak*¹, an Achik woman, named Nunui Nanokhi alias Noini Mechik, was accustomed to carry an image of a goddess, named Phojou², on her head day and night. Whether asleep or awake, she would not part with the image on her head.

At that time, there was an Assamese king, named Lilasingh,³ who was extremely cruel, wicked and tyrannous. He began to commit wanton aggressions against the Achiks and to oppress them. He was so heartless and inhuman that he treated the Achiks as beasts of burden.

Therefore, in the course of time, the Achiks rebelled against his savage conduct and waged war against him. The chief leaders and warriors among the Achiks in this war against Lilasingh were : *Gume, Roti, Asal, Jarin, Domepa, Jirik, Sakso, Wasang, Athu, Badingring, Boriding, Kepesa, Jajang, Silma and Rothang.*

During a phase of this war, Nunui Nanokhi, in order to help her children who were crying, took down the image from her head and placed it on the ground. Afterwards; when she tried to put it back up again, she found that she could not lift it off the ground, no matter how hard she tried.

Realising that her utmost efforts to replace the image were of no avail, Nunui Nanokhi performed *Krita* (or *Puja*) before Phojou at that place.

Phojou continued to remain on the spot where Nunui Nanokhi first put her down from her head. The Achiks called this sacred place of worship *Salaram Mithdeichak*. The Ajongs⁴ named it *Kamakhya*.⁵

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma at Village Salpara,
District Goalpara, Assam.

DOMBI WARI

Among the Achiks in ancient days there lived in a village on the bank of the Rongdik River¹ in Achik Asong a man named Joreng. He had a very beautiful wife, called Dombi, who was stated to belong to the Rema clan of the Achiks. Dombi was, in fact, the most beautiful woman in all the regions round about. Joreng used to boast often of her beauty, openly asserting that in that age no one could surpass his beloved wife in pulchritude.

One day before a batch of his compatriots by the side of a deep pool in the Rongdik River, Joreng was loudly eulogizing the virtues and accomplishments of his wife. He blurted out blatantly that his wife, even after giving birth to her second child, still retained her charming youthfulness and matchless beauty. A young son of a mermaid, living in the inner recesses of the pool, heard the proud man's boastful words and determined to find out for himself how beautiful Dombi really was. Accordingly he concealed himself in a shallow portion of the pool waiting for Dombi to come to draw water.

Sometime later Dombi came to the pool, and when the young water-wight saw her, he fell in love with her at once. So, when Dombi came down to the river to bathe later on, the young water-wight abducted her and took her quickly to his aquatic home in the pool. Now, in this respect, the Achiks firmly believe that whenever mermaids, mermen or water-wights snatch away human beings alive from dry land and take them to their watery dwellings, they have a special power by virtue of which they are able to keep their captives alive in the water, enabling them to breathe and making them immune to wet and cold. So, the beautiful wife of Joreng remained alive inside the pool, living with the water-wight just as if she was still an inhabitant of dry land. Also, she still retained all her beauty and charm.

Now, Dombi's first child, a young tender girl still in her teens, was a witness to her mother's abduction. The young girl carried her sister tied to her back by means of a piece of cloth. Although she saw her mother disappear into the pool, she did not

fully grasp the real situation, but believed that her mother had gone down below for some reason of her own. So when the baby vociferously cried out in hunger, the young girl, standing on a rock by the side of the pool, shouted to her mother :

"Mother, come back, baby is crying. Come, give her suck."

Dombi heard her elder daughter's voice and speedily arose to the water's edge where her children were. The young water-wight followed her, holding her body tightly in his arms. When the beautiful woman expressed a strong desire to feed her child, the water-wight allowed the upper portion of her body to emerge above the water, while he held on to her legs below. In this way Dombi was able to give suck to her baby. When the child's hunger was satiated, the mother told her elder daughter to return home and mind the baby well.

At home Joreng asked his daughter where her mother had gone. She answered that she had not yet returned home from bathing. At this the father concluded that his beloved wife had been drowned in the pool. He did not believe his daughter when she told him the story of her mother being alive inside the pool and of her having come to the surface to give suck to her baby.

Next day the young girl went down to the pool with her small sister on her back and called to her mother to give suck to the baby as before. Joreng, meanwhile, having been overcome with an insatiable desire of ascertaining the truth of his daughter's tale, had secretly followed her to the pool, concealed himself behind a nearby rock, and watched the proceedings with great eagerness. His curiosity was rewarded. He watched his daughter approach the pool, heard her call her mother, and then observed something move under the water. In the twinkling of an eye he saw his beautiful wife appear above the ripples and give suck to her child. With a heavy heart Joreng watched her disappear beneath the waves once more.

The following day Joreng vigorously whetted and burnished his *milam* (two-edged sword) to win back his wife. He sharpened it so assiduously that a fly which happened to alight upon the edge of the blade was immediately cut into two; and he burnished it so brightly that it looked like a streak of lightning. Joreng then ordered his daughter to call her mother as before while he himself lay hidden close by with his *milam* in his hands. The child did as she was told; and soon Dombi's body up to her

waist rose over the surface of water, but her legs were shackled in the strong grip of the water-wight under the water. Joreng nimbly leaped to his feet, firmly caught hold of his wife's wrist, and recklessly thrust his burnished *milam* into the water to frighten her captor. Seeing the flashing sword, the terrified water-wight let loose his fair captive in a hurry. So great was Joreng's exultation in retrieving his beautiful wife that he passionately danced upon the ground, and hilariously yelled aloud in sheer joy. The water-wight heard his victorious cry and took it to heart. He vowed immediate revenge.

In order to keep himself and his family out of harm's way, Joreng resolved to build a house on the top of a tree far from the fatal river. So, he constructed on a big *peepul* tree a large and beautiful *borang* (tree-top house) and dwelt there with his beloved wife and children. He never allowed his spouse to come down from the tree to draw water from any river or stream or rill. He himself always brought water for her and her children enough to drink and bathe in and hauled it up to the *borang*. There in his cosy little home Joreng felt serenely secure, complacently congratulating himself on putting his family beyond the reach of the water-wight or any other mischievous aquatic creature.

But the water-wight was determined to win Dombi back again. So he took his servants with him and searched for Dombi. Traces of his path, made by him and his aquatic servants, in quest of Dombi, which are known as *Dombiko Am'ani Rama*, that is, the Path in Quest of Dombi, are identifiable in the village-lands of Aruakgiri and Nokatgiri in Garo Hills upto this day. At length he discovered where Dombi was and he began to dig an underground tunnel to the place where the big *peepul* tree with Joreng's *borang* on it, was located. He employed giant aquatic serpents, known as *sangkries*, gigantic eels, massive crabs, water-lizards, alligators and thousands of gigantic *bhowal* and *sheng* fishes to help him in the task of excavating the tunnel which was to reach from the pool to the *borang*. By utilizing the water power of the river, the tunnel was completed within a few weeks. All the earth and stones immediately under the *peepul* tree and its environment were silently removed to a great depth and conveyed to a distant place by water. In time the underground vicinity thus excavated was filled only with water which

served as a prop to the outer crust of the earth. There was no indication from above of the mischief the revengeful water-wight had caused below. The villain now awaited developments.

One summer night it rained so incessantly the whole night long that the rivers were all swollen in flood. Amidst the swish of pelting rain and the howl of boisterous wind a water-wraith warned Joreng that he and his family would be drowned unless they moved at once from the *borang* and went to the top of Dura Hill. This was too much for Joreng to believe, as he could not understand how anything untoward could happen since they all lived so far distant from the river. So the complacent husband and father did not heed the water-wraith's advice. He and his family then went off to sleep, smugly content in the shelter of the *borang* and never dreaming of the perilous condition in which they were.

The following morning the villagers, noticing that the big *peepul* tree with the beautiful *borang* on it was no more, went to visit the place. They were awestruck at the enormous lake they discovered on the spot. The gigantic *peepul* tree with Joreng's *borang* on it, including himself and his family, had sunk deep into the subterranean region.

This lake, known as Dombi Wari or the Pool of Dombi can still be seen in the Emangiri² Government Reserve Forest in the Achik land.

—Told by Khalsan Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Emangiri, Garo Hills.

RAJA ABONG NOGA AND HIS QUEEN

Raja Abong Noga was once the king of all the interior hills in Achikland¹ now inhabited by the Abengs, Matchis, Kotchus, Awes, Duals, Chisaks, Atongs, Megams and Gara Ganchings.² He was also known as Nokma Abong Chirepa.³ His wife was of Chambugong clan.

There came a time when the fair verdant land of Achik Asong was smitten with a grievous drought and famine; the Simsang River shrank to a mere trickle at Mrig Wari⁴; the Ahnang Wari of the Ildek River⁵ became only knee-deep; and the plains and hills of Achik Asong became arid deserts incapable of supporting life. The drought lasted for seven long years.

Raja Abong Noga enforced assigned labour on his subjects when they were all hard up for food and drink. He built a huge long machan house⁶ on a ridge of the Mongre Hill,⁷ overlooking the Mrig Wari, a deep pool in the Simsang River. For the maintenance of it, he assigned various tasks to different villages in his kingdom.

Thus, the people of Village Rongbinggiri were allotted the task of fishing out *era* fish from the clear stony pools; the people of Rewak and Siju⁸ were told to catch carp and murrel fish for his kitchen; the people of Emangiri,⁹ to hew wooden troughs for his cattle to drink from; the people of Rongmagre and Dapsigre¹⁰ to make earthen pots and dishes out of the good clay found locally. The earthenware was tested by tapping the finished product along the side with the finger tips.

Other villages were also ordered to perform specific tasks: the Chisaks, to raise millet and do dairy work; the people of Badri,¹¹ to catch crabs and store crab-egg in huge earthen containers; the people of Simsanggre,¹² to feed his swine; the people of Matchi,¹³ to cultivate maize, Job's tears and rear parrots for him; the Abengs,¹⁴ to grow and pick cotton for him; the people of Daranggre,¹⁵ to collect the fruit of the *sokmil* cane;¹⁶ the Gara Ganchings,¹⁷ to carve pig-troughs and stools; the Kotchus,¹⁸ to smoke fish over fire to dry; the Ahwes,¹⁹ to collect edible bamboo shoots; and the people of Rongrong

Dangkhong,²⁰ to feed his cattle at Sambol Ahding, that is, the Hillock of Sambol, and so on.

At the end of the terrible drought, the subjects of Raja Abong Noga revolted against him; for they could no longer remain in the galling subjection in which they were placed in the fair land of Achik Asong. So they killed his second eldest daughter, Mene, by heaping baskets of paddy grains on her and thus suffocating her secretly. His third daughter, Meje, was killed by heaping up of cotton-wool on her and thus burying her alive underneath a huge pile of cotton-wool. They made a raft of wild plantain-trees and on it sent his fourth daughter, Chini, adrift on the Simsang River. They attacked his guard and tried to capture the king and his queen themselves. But Raja Abong Noga and his Queen, Silme Dokka, escaped, fled to the top of Nokrek Hill in the Dura Range and settled there for the remainder of their days.

Now this Queen knew little about manual work. She did not even know how to cook rice and curry. As for raising rice, corn, millet and other grains and cereals, it was completely beyond her ken. She had a few servants; but these had accompanied the fugitive Queen more out of curiosity than loyalty. They wanted to enjoy themselves at her bewilderment in domestic affairs. So they adroitly teased her in every way, and would do nothing to alleviate her sufferings.

One day, the wretched Queen, out of sheer necessity, begged the servants to instruct her in the art of sowing paddy, millet and corn. They told her that she must partially boil the grains so as to aid them in speedy germination and place them precisely in the earth by means of a wooden dibble. The Queen gullibly followed their advice to the very letter. She was completely puzzled when she discovered that her carefully sown seeds did not germinate.

Left thus unsuccoured, the Queen, Silme Dokka, one day asked the servants how to split firewood. The servants answered:

"We are accustomed to split it over our knees."

The Queen naively followed their treacherous advice and died from the deep wounds she received on her knees while performing the task.

Raja Abong Noga's third daughter, Meje Rani, had an infant girl. This baby was in the arms of one of Meje Rani's

women servants, at the moment when Meje Rani was murdered by her subjects in the way narrated above. The murderers wanted to kill Meje Rani's daughter ; but the kind-hearted woman servant, named Nogang, said to them, "No, No, this is my own daughter, not Meje Rani's. You cannot kill her." The woman servant thus told lies to the murderous subjects as she passionately desired to preserve the precious royal seed. The woman servant carefully nursed and brought up the royal baby, who, in the course of time, grew into a beautiful girl. This daughter of Meje Rani was called Keme. Keme was ultimately married to Ushung Raja, who was one of the sons of Gobela Magenpa. Gobela Magenpa, who belonged to Nongbreh clan, was a strong independent Achik Chieftain at Bindergru. Nogang clarified the true history of Keme before Gobela Magenpa and his son Ushung.

It was Ushung who originally founded the *akhingland* (hereditarily-held land) of Chuchong, the present Shusung in the District of Mymensingh in East Bengal. Shusung was also called *Durgapur* after the name of Durga Chambugong, the eldest son of Ushung. Ushung belonged to Sinthang Manda clan. In the course of time, (i.e., in 1280 A.D.) one religious mendicant, named Somesware Pathak or Somesware Thakur, dispossessed Baisa Raja, one of the reigning grandsons at Chuchong, through foul play and usurped possession of the *akhingland* of Chuchong.

—Told by Jingnang Raksam Marak, Nokma
at Village Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

GANGBO NOKMA CHIPO RAJA

Several centuries ago there lived a man named Gangbo Nokma in one of the ancient villages in the south-western portion of Achik Asong, where a division of the Achik took to ploughing under their Chieftain named Lengtha Raja. The name of the village has been buried in oblivion and its site overgrown with trees and grass for many, many years.

Gangbo Nokma was very wealthy and powerful ; he was a quick-witted, crafty, pragmatic and proud individual. Because of his haughty domineering ways, he was extremely unpopular with his neighbours. Though outwardly they feared him, inwardly they wished his ruin.

One day all the elders of the village held a secret meeting in which a plan was hatched to burn Gangbo Nokma's house with himself and his whole family in it. The victim of this sinister design got scent of it and secretly removed all his money, jewels and riches and buried them in a nearby forest. All other articles of value were quietly removed to convenient places. The man himself went about as if he were wholly ignorant of the intrigue against him.

The next night the enemies of Gangbo Nokma fastened the doors of his house from outside and set fire to it. However Gangbo and his family escaped unscathed through an opening in the back wall which he had previously prepared. The next morning to all intents and purposes he assumed the rôle of a completely ruined man. He told the villagers that the ashes of his house were all that he could call his own, and that with them he would be able with little difficulty to raise a bigger fortune. So he filled up a dozen or more sacks with ashes and carried them in the direction of the market town. However, on the way he stealthily threw them into a river, at the same time muttering that the villagers, who burned down his house, will go the way of the ashes in the water.

Now the villagers had seen him carry away the ashes ; but they were not interested in what he would do with them, since most of the people believed that the man had gone completely off his head in collecting the ashes and walking towards the

market town with them. Gangbo himself dug up all his money and precious jewels and proudly marched into the village with them in broad daylight. In the sight of all the villagers he began to count his coins and proudly display his jewels. The onlookers were very much surprised at his sudden acquisition of wealth. With bated breath, they eagerly asked him how he came by it. He replied :

"The ashes of our dwellings are in great demand by some foreign merchants in the market town. It was very fortunate that my house was burnt. Its ashes brought me more money than I ever had before. You should remember that what apparently seem to be calamities are often blessings in disguise."

Gangbo argued with the villagers in such a convincing manner that they at once burnt up their own dwellings with all they had in them and filled sacks with the ashes. Then they marched together to the market town and offered the ashes for sale. The market people laughed derisively at the wares of the villagers and looked upon them as lunatics for wanting to sell such useless things as ashes in the market. At this the villagers were beside themselves with rage against Gangbo. They returned home empty-handed and determined to kill all Gangbo's cattle and eat them up. They were met by Gangbo himself who politely expressed sorrow that the foreign merchants who dealt in ashes had departed from the locality a few days back. He told them that the foreign merchants really purchased ashes from him for manure and that it was natural that they should now wish to vent their rage upon him, but that they would be doing him a great wrong. He said :

"I feel sorry for all of you since you've come back empty-handed from the same market from which I returned loaded with wealth. All I told you was that I got the money by selling the ashes of my house. I did not ask you to burn your own houses ; neither did I say that you would be blessed with the same good fortune as myself. So you see, I am far from being the cause of your disaster. Pray do not think of doing any wrong to me or else something may happen to you in the long run."

The villagers would not listen to his entreaty, but forcibly took away all his cattle and slaughtered them. Gangbo implored them to be merciful enough to spare him the skins of the slain animals at least. They granted this request, since they had

no use for the skins. Gangbo took the skins of his slain cattle, dried them in the sun, punctured some of them so that they might appear more useless than ever, made strong bags out of the remaining ones and marched out of the village, taking a southern road.

By and by Gangbo came upon a very rich cultivator who was ploughing his field a few hundred cubits distant from his house. Gangbo introduced himself as a travelling leather merchant who was ready to buy good and bad skins alike, and asked the man for a drink of water. The farmer directed him to his house, saying that his children were there and would give him a drink. Thereupon, Gangbo went to the farmer's house and told the man's children that their father had sent him for his money and jewels. Instinctively, the children refused to show the stranger the place where their father's wealth was stored. Gangbo then yelled out to the farmer, saying :

"They say they will not give it. They say they will not give it."

The farmer, busy as he was with his ploughing, did not bother himself about what his children were really refusing to give the stranger. He simply surmised that they were denying the man a mere drink of water. So he brandished the stick with which he had been goading on the drought animals in the direction of the children and cried out angrily to them :

"If you don't give it to him, I'll use this stick on you. This stick !"

The children obediently showed Gangbo a big earthen pitcher filled to the brim with money, but sealed at the mouth. Gangbo speedily broke the seal, poured out all the shining coins into his crude cowhide bags, rolled these inside the pieces of punctured hides and marched off towards the cultivator to allay the suspicion of the children. He thanked the man for the drink of water which in reality he had never taken, and joyfully made his way back home to his native village, now a richer man than ever. On the way he discarded the punctured cattle skins.

Gangbo eventually reached his village, poured out all his coins from the leather bag in the presence of the villagers and began to count them before their very eyes. The onlookers were amazed at the immense money he exhibited. They asked him how he acquired such a huge fortune. He replied :

"If you want to become rich, kill your cattle. Do not spare any. Skin the slain beasts. Puncture the skins; go and sell them in the market as quickly as possible. You made me richer by killing all my cattle, thus enabling me to sell their skins at an opportune moment. Adversities do not ruin a man, if they come at the time when the tide of fortune is up."

The credulous villagers straightway killed all their cattle, dried the skins, bored them through and through and took them to the market for sale. Nobody there wanted to buy the skins which they spread out for all to see. As a matter of fact, the villagers were taken to be crazy fools for attempting to sell such useless punctured skins.

While the villagers were at the market, Gangbo set out for the same place to enjoy their embarrassment. On the outskirts of the market he met a travelling cloth merchant who was accustomed to sell rare and precious cloth on credit, if he felt satisfied with the house of the purchaser. Now, near the wayside was a cluster of well-built houses, the owners of which were all absent in the market on matters of business; for market day then, as now, was a hey day in the lives of all the villagers. Only the children were at home.

Gangbo entered one of these houses and asked some small children for a drink of water. He seated himself on the porch while the children fetched water. As he drank Gangbo talked freely with the children as if they were his own. The cloth-seller came by, and seeing the man and children on the porch, anxiously approached with the sole purpose of making a sale. He showed Gangbo the cloth and offered to sell some of it to him. Gangbo replied humbly that he was really in need of new cloth, but at the moment had not cash on hand with which to make the purchase. Thereupon, the merchant graciously offered to let him have some valuable cloth on credit. Gangbo readily accepted the kind offer.

Now the merchant was not fully acquainted with the vernacular of the place. He asked Gangbo to show him his own house and to give him his name as well as the name of his father. So Gangbo politely showed him the house where he happened to be and said that it was his own. Then without the least embarrassment he said that his name was *Onjawa*, which meant "Will-Not-Give" and that his father's name was *Manjawa*.

which meant "Could-Not-Get." Both these were spoken in the local dialect with which the merchant was unfamiliar. However, he took down the names of *Onjava* and *Manjava* as genuine names, handed over cloth of the rarest kind to Gangbo, noted the house and its surroundings carefully and departed in glee at having made such a successful sale. He told the buyer that he would return in a year for payment. Of course, the cloth merchant did return after twelve months to the same place to demand payment of the house-owner, when the latter not only denied all knowledge of *Onjava* and *Manjava*, but became angry with the insistent merchant, belaboured him with the help of a few neighbours and left him half-dead by the roadside.

Now when Gangbo purchased the cloth on credit, he bound it up neatly and returned proudly to his village. There, he dressed himself in the rarest clothes and appeared like a man about to be married. In the meantime, his co-villagers who had been severely ridiculed at the market place for attempting to sell punctured cattle skins were returning to the village, full of wrath against Gangbo. On the way they solemnly vowed that they would straightway put the deceitful man to death in the cruellest possible way. The way they decided was to bind him up, put him in a bamboo basket and drown him in a pond far away from their native village. For this purpose they prepared a huge, strong basket.

When the angry villagers arrived home, they saw Gangbo attired in his new clothes. They wasted no words with him but silently seized him, tied him up and thrust him into the basket. Then they took up the basket and carried it away to a distant pond. When they reached the spot, they were very tired and hungry; so they decided to eat before getting rid of the miscreant. They put down the basket on the bank of the pond and walked away a few hundred yards to take their meal under a large banyan tree. As soon as they were out of sight a young cowherd came along and curiously examined the strange basket. This cow boy came daily to this place to give his cattle a drink. This day he brought about a hundred heads of cattle with him.

The boy discovered Gangbo in the basket and asked him what he was doing there. The artful captive replied in a mournful voice :

"I am being taken against my will under orders of our king to be the bridegroom of a beautiful princess. She is madly in love with me, so the king has decided to take me away by force to be the husband of his bewitching daughter. I do not love her. The servants of the king left me here alone. They saw that I could by no means escape."

The boy listened with mouth wide open, and Gangbo went on :

"They have gone to the palace of the king to announce that I am being brought there by force so that great preparations for the marriage festival can be made. Soon they will return with more men, bringing, no doubt, a royal carriage to take me hence. When I reach the palace, I shall be wedded by force to the charming princess amidst much rejoicing and to my great chagrin. It is because of my having to wed a princess against my will that I am crying and weeping. Moreover, I am in love with a beautiful peasant girl who to me is the sweetest, fairest, purest and dearest girl in the whole world. I want her alone for my wife. I shudder to think of encumbering myself with power and riches by marrying the king's daughter. His ministers have assured me that I could escape from this ordeal, if I could only find a proxy who must be either a farmer like myself or a cowherd like you. Hitherto, I have found no one to help me."

Now this particular cowherd had been leading a very hard life, minding a large number of cows and calves every day. He was amazed at the wonderful things Gangbo revealed to him, and thought that the man was a fool to decline marrying a princess merely for sentimental reasons. Presently he said to Gangbo :

"Were I in your place, I would fly like a bird to the palace even now. Why not send me as a substitute?"

"Quick then," explained Gangbo. "If you are really serious, untie this basket and let me out; give me your tattered clothes and don my gorgeous wedding apparel. Get into the basket and remain silent. Cover your face under pretence that you are in deep sorrow when the king's servants come to bear you away. I'll become a cowherd in your stead."

The boy willingly exchanged clothes with Gangbo in the shortest possible time, got into the basket and allowed himself to be securely tied up. Gangbo himself did not delay in driving

away the cattle towards his village and leaving the innocent cowherd to his fate.

After finishing their repast the villagers returned to the spot where they had left their unhappy victim. Without examining it further, they unceremoniously kicked the basket into the pond, watched the bubbles rising in the spot where it went down, and danced with savage joy at the thought that at last they had got rid of their intrepid foe. Then they returned to their village.

The wonderment of the villagers knew no bounds, however, when, on reaching home, they discovered Gangbo there in possession of fine cows, bulls and calves. They were stupefied at the sight and could not utter a word. Gangbo, perceiving their wonderment, said :

"I thank you heartily for putting me in possession of this herd. Under the charmed pond, for charmed it doubtless is, there lies a wonderful village where there are such fine cows, bullocks and calves galore. Their owners are all anxious to exchange them for bamboo-threads which they highly prize. If any of you dare go down deep into the pool, securely bound in the bambo-baskets so that no aquatic animal may harm you on the way, you will certainly obtain a similar herd of cattle."

It was beyond the credulous villagers to see through what Gangbo told them. One of them said :

"It is as true as my own existence that we put him with our own hands into the basket before the eyes of all, and that we kicked the basket into the water with our own strong legs. We also saw with our own eyes the bubbles rising in the spot where the basket went down. We see no earthly reason to explain how he could ever have escaped. This time he must be telling us the truth."

The villagers nodded assent ; then they commenced to make big bamboo baskets for themselves. With their own hands they carried the completed baskets to the spot where they had kicked Gangbo into the water. They brought a lot of food and rice-beer and made a merry feast in anticipation of the huge herd of cows, which would soon be theirs. With glad hearts they got into the baskets and boisterously bade Gangbo tie them up securely and kick them into the water. So great was their desire to reach the supposed happy region underneath the pond !

Gangbo tied up the baskets one by one firmly and finally rolled them all into the water, shouting as he did so :

"Now at last your own malice overwhelms and destroys you all."

Soon countless bubbles were seen rising in the places where the baskets had tumbled. The villagers were all drowned like rats because of their stupid credulity.

Gangbo went back and took possession of the villagers' lands and property and made their wives and children his subjects. He grew rich and powerful and lived happily afterwards, rulling over an extensive tract of the country as an independent Achik Chieftain. He was ever renowned for his sagacity, astuteness and foresight. The name of Gangbo Nokma Chipa Raja was indeed a name to be reckoned with among the Achiks for a good number of years.

—Told by Shersing Marak Rangsa at Barengapara,
District Garo Hills.

CHELA ASANPA AND BRARA

Among the Achiks in Achik Asong in a village on the bank of the lower stages of the Damring River,¹ there lived a very strong man named Chela Asanpa. He was a person of gigantic physical proportions, being nine cubits in height with a body proportionately well built and thick-set. So great was his strength that Chela Asanpa could lift a full-grown tusker high above his head, uproot the biggest clumps of stiff *wahnok* bamboos (*bambusa teres*), tear apart the largest living python, break in twain with ease the full-matured branching horns of a stag, play with a huge wild buffalo as if it were a mere he-goat, and perform many other marvellous feats which called for extraordinary physical strength.

This strong man was, however, queer enough to be terribly afraid of a hen with her brood. He would rather gladly face any known foe than the hen with her chickens under her wings. For this reason he was also known as Chela Asanpa Bika Dohbima, that is, Chela Asanpa, the Chicken-hearted.

Chela Asanpa was also a colossal eater. At one time he killed an enormous bull, skinned it, cooked the beast, bone and all, and ate it with his cooked rice and roasted chillies without throwing away so much as a particle of flesh or bone as refuse. At another time he roasted a five year old castrated pig and ate it with his meal of boiled rice and roasted chillies at one stretch. Normally, he required twelve cocks to be cooked as curry with vegetables and a heap of cooked rice, about three cubits high for his ordinary breakfast. Seven or eight persons could easily have had their fill with what was necessary for his alone.

Chela Asanpa was very fond of wrestling and engaging in contests which called for the full measure of his physical strength. For this purpose he would wander all over the country searching for some individual with whom to match his stupendous strength. He found no greater joy than in having an opportunity to come to grips with some gigantic man and floor him in a physical contest, even though there was no reward for his victory or no eye-witness to applaud his prowess or no one to congratulate him on his success. So, it was merely for the pure joy of fighting

that, taking his trusted *milam* (two-edged sword) and *spi* (rectangular shield) in his hands, and carrying some rice for food with him, Chela Asanpa would trek long distances over the hills and through deep forest glens to find a worthy opponent for himself. He was well-matched only by one gigantic and strong man of his time, the friendly Bika Rangipa, who belonged to the Koksi clan of the Achiks.

Once, while Chela Asanpa was travelling along through a dense forest in the land of Bijasik,² a big wild buffalo came rushing at him with the intention of slaying him. Chela Asanpa met the onslaught with his *spi*; but, as the attack had been sudden he was propelled backward with such force that he dashed his head against the trunk of a dead *sal* tree (*Shorea robusta*) and, consequently, saw more stars for a moment than there are in the heavens. At once regaining his footing and casting away his *milam* and *spi*, he caught hold of the horns of the wild buffalo, pushed it backwards a considerable distance, lifted it off the ground and dashed its huge head against a massive rock so ferociously that the beast's jaws were simply smashed to a pulp. He then twisted the beast's neck in his strong hands and killed it.

Chela Asanpa then took up his *milam* and *spi* in one hand and the carcass of the buffalo in the other and walked to a nearby stream. There he washed the carcass, lighted a huge fire, tore the beast, limb by limb, roasted the four legs and consumed them, bone and all, at one sitting. The rest of the flesh he cut into slices, strung them on a slit of bamboo, and carried them with him on his journey.

In an ancient village by the Simsang River Chela Asanpa came across a very strong man who was sitting in an open courtyard of his house making bamboo-threads out of big *wahnok* bamboos by splitting open the thick stiff nodes with his mere hands. The strong man welcomed Chela Asanpa cordially, killed a fatling bull for him and entertained him with food and drink. After he had dined Chela Asanpa said to his host :

"I have heard much about you and so have come to wrestle with you. If you defeat me in a wrestling bout, you will have to come over to my village with your *milam* and *spi* for a duel. First, I shall entertain you with a grand feast in my house. Then we shall go to the village proper where we shall fight our duel

with our *milams* and *spis*. If you are defeated you must leave your head with me. If I loose, you shall have my head to bring home here as a trophy. However, if you are defeated in our wrestling bout tomorrow, I shall leave you in peace as a man of no account to me. Do you agree?"

The strong burly man of the ancient village readily agreed.

The next day the two contestants cleared a site on the plain, loamy soil near the bank of the Simsang River. They together bathed and ate their meal. Then they began their wrestling contest in the clearing which they had earlier prepared. It was a titanic struggle, each holding the other in deadly grips, and trying his utmost to hurl the other down. What a spectacle they presented, these two enormously strong men clenched in each other's ironlike arms, straining their immense muscles, bending their huge bodies in an effort to fling and floor each other! At times they appeared like lifeless statues on pedestal, so immovable they stood, though at such moments they were utilizing their full physical capacity to cause each other to give way. They sank deep into the loamy soil in the midst of their tremendous struggle. All about the ground was drenched with their perspiration. Hour followed hour. The sun stood on the western horizon, and the two mighty giants wrestled on continuously without one being able to floor the other. Both were by now almost utterly exhausted. Finally, exerting all his strength Chela Asanpa made one last vigorously desperate attempt to hurl his opponent down on the ground and succeeded. The colossal contest was over.

The victor and the vanquished praised each other's performance. Hand in hand they went down to the river to bathe. After that the strong man of the ancient village killed a seven-year old castrated pig for Chela Asanpa, procured a good deal of rice-beer, and dined with his conqueror until late at night. In the morning the host killed thirty-two cocks and twelve hens in the name of Chela Asanpa for the purpose of divining the future of his guest. After examining the entrails of the cocks and hens he said to Chela Asanpa :

"My divination indicates that you will go on vanquishing all whom you encounter and that you will never allow your head to fall into the hands of an enemy. However, you will die a natural death at a ripe age, full of honour and fame. Your name and fame will remain in the mouths of our descendants for

generations to come. Now, friend, take your full share of our customary Achik hospitality."

The man then ordered his wife and daughters to cook the cocks and hens with fermented dried grains of bamboo-shoots, rice-flour and best of sediments for his honoured guest. They dined with great joviality. As Chela Asanpa was about to depart, he said to his generous host :

"I have eaten and drunk to my heart's content. I am very much thankful to you. I leave you my best wishes and sincerest regards."

The host politely replied : "Please, do not mention it. I feel proud that I have been blessed with the opportunity of entertaining such a strong and valiant personage as yourself. My blessings go with you."

Chela Asanpa then left the village full of satisfaction and started for home. On the way he passed through a mighty forest in the land of Bolmoram³ where he came upon a huge python struggling with a big stag. The latter was faintly emitting its last cries, being near death. Chela Asanpa watched the struggle from a distance. When the stag was finally completely dead, the python uncoiled itself and began to wander around as if to perform some preliminary preparations before swallowing the carcass. In a jiffy Chela Asanpa seized the dead stag, lifted it up by the horns and started off for home again. In the twinkling of an eye, the huge python darted at him with angry hisses, coiled itself instantly around his body, and started at his head with its opened cavernous mouth.

Dropping his *mīlam*, *spi* and the carcass quickly, Chela Asanpa caught hold of the python's head with one hand and uncoiled himself from its encircling body with the other. He put one foot on the wriggling body and pulled the head so ferociously with his hands that it snapped in two immediately below the neck. The severed body, yet a living mass, sinuously squirmed on the ground for a while. Chela Asanpa hurled the snake's head far away. Then he carried both the carcasses home to eat. There he peeled off the python's skin with his fingers, roasted its flesh over the glowing embers of his hearth and ate it for his evening meal. He next singed the hair off the body of the stag, cut it and smoked the bits slowly over his fire for his coming

meals. Carefully used, the flesh of the big stag would provide him food for two meals.

Chela Asanpa later wandered towards the sources of the Simsang River and went as far as Arbella Hill. At an ancient village between Nokrek Peak and Arbella Hill, he found another very strong man who was husking a huge basketful of paddy on a spacious flat rock with his fist. Blow by blow he husked the rice and blew away the chaff to a far distance with deep puffs of breath. Nearby lay a heap of already husked rice. Chela Asanpa watched with interest this novel way of paddy husking and came to the conclusion that only a man of great strength could do it in such a manner. Thereupon, he went over to the man and introduced himself.

When his work was finished the man took Chela Asanpa to his house. He kept a close watch on his guest fearing that a person of such gigantic bulk could harm him seriously, if he had a mind to do so.

After the host and his guest had eaten heartily they sat together and talked. During their conversation, the man said to Chela Asanpa :

"Now, tell me, what really made you come to my village ? What is your mission ?"

Chela Asanpa replied :

"It is because I have discovered you to be a very strong man in this rugged region that I have come here. Tomorrow you must wrestle with me. If you are defeated in the contest, you will be left in peace with my fullest blessings. If you win, you are invited to come to my village with your *Millam* and *Spi* for a duel with me. First I shall entertain you sumptuously ; then we shall fight our duel. The victor gets the head of the vanquished. Do you agree to my proposals ?"

The host nodded complete assent.

The next morning the host killed twenty-five cocks and ten hens for his guest. For the special purpose of divining the outcome of the contest, he killed six additional big cocks and examined their entrails. His lips twitched with dissatisfaction at his discovery. The two combatants took their meals together, quaffed rice-beer out of a large pitcher for a while, and finally went out into an open courtyard to wrestle in the presence of a number of villagers. The struggle began in right earnest ; but

before one could count up to a hundred, it was all over. Chela Asanpa without much difficulty had defeated his opponent. He was not at all pleased with his easy success. However, he praised the man for fighting him without fear. The latter, not at all chagrined by his ignominious defeat, heartily congratulated the winner. Together they hurried down to a stream and bathed themselves.

The two, conqueror and conquered, hurried back to the strong man's house where they drank more rice-beer and ate the *kazi* (fried flesh) of twenty-five ducks and nine cocks which the host caused to be prepared in a moment's notice by his wives, sons and daughters. This was not a very difficult task, for the man had fifteen wives, twenty-six sons and thirty-two daughters.

After a hearty meal Chela Asanpa took up his *milam* and *spi* and started off for the south. Before he left he thanked the host profusely for his great generosity and wished him future happiness. The man requested his guest not to mention the food and drink which he had received in his house and claimed that his entertainment fell far short of customary Achik hospitality.

Chela Asanpa crossed the Dura Hill by the Sogingitok Pass, that is, the pass of the Vulture, and came down to Ganchi village, where he lodged for the night in the village *Nokphante* (that is, Bachelors' House). Seeing his giant strength, the villagers provided him with as much food and drink as he required. They told him about a big tiger which had killed several persons in the locality and had been creating terror among them for some time. They advised him not to sleep in the open portico of the *Nokphante* at night lest the tiger attack him. Chela Asanpa, knowing not fear, disregarded their advice, and lay down to sleep on the raised open portico of the Bachelors' House.

About midnight, Chela Asanpa heard a rustling sound nearby. He craned his neck and peered in the direction from whence the sound proceeded and beheld two bright lights which looked like a couple of twin torches. He at once discerned their identity and watched them draw closer. At length the complete tiger came into view and leaped up to the portico to kill the man he had spied there. But Chela Asanpa was ready for the attack. With a mighty sweep of his *milam*, he struck at the huge beast which he could only see dimly in the darkness. However, his blow struck its mark and the tiger fell down dead. Chela

Asanpa went on sleeping soundly for the rest of the night at the same place as if nothing had happened. Early the next morning the villagers crowded the *Nokphante* to see the enormous wild beast with a mighty cut on its body which extended from its left shoulders almost to its right armpit. From tail to nose the tiger measured fourteen cubits and a span.

The villagers were very grateful to Chela Asanpa for ridding them of their common enemy. They offered him plenty of *chubitchi* (liquid extract of rice-beer). They also killed a bull for him. The carcass of the tiger they fastened to a strong wooden pole in the form of a cross and set it up at the joining of two main pathways near their village to show other tigers what a mighty man could do to a mighty member of their race.

Chela Asanpa now singed off the hair of the bull, which the villagers had given him, over a slow fire, tore it into pieces with his hands, put it into an enormous wide-mouthed cauldron, put about ten thousand red chillies and six handfulls of salt on top of the flesh and cooked the whole thing. When it was ready, he consumed the whole fare in the presence of the villagers whose wonder knew no bounds when they beheld him eat the whole bull at one sitting. They cried out in awe : "This mighty man eats mightily and achieves mightily."

Sometime later Chela Asanpa proceeded on his journey westwards, turned north and came to the eastern spur of the Ranggira Hill. A full-grown wild tusker crossed his path at Mikgisi Ading in the land of Waramgiri.⁵ The tusker rushed at him with the intention of lifting him off his feet and dashing him to the ground. Chela Asanpa, however, stood firm. He quickly dropped his *milam* and *spi*, caught hold of the elephant's trunk and gave it such a wrench that he rendered it useless. Instead of lifting up Chela Asanpa from the ground, the tusker found itself lifted up. Chela Asanpa held the huge beast in one hand for a moment and then hurled it headlong down a steep ridge. The big, helpless body of the elephant rolled down and down like a massive piece of rock, moving down the *tarai* bamboo (*melocanna bambusoides*) with which the slope was covered. Finally, it came to rest at the foot of the slope where it lay dead.

Chela Asanpa proceeded home by way of Bajengdoba.⁶ There he rested for a time; but at length he started out to find some strong individual with whom to match his enormous

strength. This time he came to Nongchram Village⁷ where a very strong man named Brara lived. Chela Asanpa caught his first glimpse of this man while he was clearing his jungle for jhum cultivation, uprooting stiff clumps of *Wahma* bamboo (*bambusa teres*) with his bare hands. When Brara saw Chela Asanpa, he immediately seized his *milam* and *spi* apprehending that an enemy was coming for his head. It was the custom in those old days for every grown-up male Achik to keep his *milam* and *spi* ready at hand even in the midst of his daily work. Standing at some distance, Chela Asanpa introduced himself saying :

"I am Chela Asanpa, by clan, Dagal Bolmedam of our race, and a worthy son of Khongkal.⁸ I've come to make your acquaintance. I shall lodge for the night in your house. If you do not mind."

Brara took Chela Asanpa to his house, entertained him with rice-beer, killed a six-year old castrated pig for him and ordered his wife and servants to prepare a fitting meal. The two men ate and drank until late at night. Eventually Chela Asanpa unfolded his real purpose.

"My new friend," he said cheerfully, "I've come to you because I have heard much of you. We seek adventure where it is expected. Big cocks look for big cocks only and care little for smaller ones. I've come to you because I desire to measure my strength with yours in a friendly wrestling match. Tomorrow we wrestle, if you like. If you are defeated, I shall leave you as a man of no account to me. If you defeat me, you are invited to come to my village. There I shall entertain you richly. Afterwards we shall fight a duel with our *milams* and *spis*. In the duel the victor claims the head of the vanquished and takes it. Now, what do you say to these proposals?"

Brara answered, "I agree to your proposed wrestling bout. I agree to your duel, should I defeat you by wrestling tomorrow. But to come over to your house for a mere feast? That I cannot agree to. It is tantamount to seeking food and drink in return for what I give you. Don't you know that according to our age-long Achik custom we entertain guests and strangers with food and drink and whatever we can afford without the least expectation of anything in return? Don't you remember the old saying : If you do not feed or give drink to any guest or stranger who enters your house, having in your heart no idea of recompense ;

or if you send him or her away empty-stomached from your home, *Susime*,⁹ (Goddess of Fortune) looks down upon you with disgust? Therefore, we should take our food and drink and fight wherever it is convenient for us."

Chela Asanpa agreed with Brara without demur.

Early next morning, Brara killed a bull and thirty-five cocks and fifteen hens for the day's food. He said to his wife and servants :

"Make best beef curry and cook the best rice for dinner. Fry the cocks and hens as *kazi*."

Then he killed seven more cocks for the purpose of divining the outcome of the proposed wrestling bout. After inspecting the entrails of the cocks, he murmured to himself :

"Not so bad at the outset ; but afterwards—what ?"

Brara brought out a huge pitcherful of rice-beer for his and his guest's morning refreshment. At noon they ate their meal. In the afternoon they agreed that it was time for them to begin their wrestling bout. So they cleared some land near a stream on a small loamy plain, close to the village, and began to wrestle. Chela Asanpa in an instant grappled with Brara. At the outset the two seemed to be equally matched. It was a grand sight.

The two giants exerted their immense strength to the best of their ability in order to defeat each other. How they strained their wiry muscles ! How they snorted in the heat of the fray like a pair of buffaloes ! How firmly their legs were planted on the ground like pillars of iron ! How they perspired ! The more they exerted their titanic strength against each other, the more they appeared immovable like two statues. Yet, what a wonderful amount of human force and energy was being expended at such moments ! Chela Asanpa possessed his wonted vigour and thought he would speedily overcome his adversary, despite his great strength. But Brara was a noted wrestler. He knew all the mysteries of the science. He could give the famous *Dikgil hug* with the fervour of a gigantic black bear.

The combat was hard and long. All along, they wrenched, thrust, swung each other violently round the cleared space which served for a ring, and each displayed his muscular powers and skill. Indeed, time and again—

"They rush, impetuous, with a shock,

Their arms implicit, rigid, lock ;

They twist ; they trip ; their limbs mixed.
As one they move ; as on stand fixed.
Now plant their feet in wider space,
And stand like statues on their base."

At length Chela Asanpa most desperately attempted to throw Brara down, and with this end in view, lifted him bodily in the air and dashed him down, but Brara managed to throw out a leg, and meet the ground with his foot, which saved him. Never before Chela Asanpa had to deal with such a man as Brara, who, siezing a sudden opportunity, succeeded in flinging the former flat on the ground. He held him down, and planted his knee on his chest with such force that he nearly squeezed all the breath out of Chela Asanpa.

Thus by the time the sun was on the horizon in the west, Chela Asanpa was, for the first time in his life, defeated. No word did Chela Asanpa utter, for he was at that moment incapable of speech ; but the colour of his face and his protruding tongue induced Brara to remove his knee. Brara rose from his prostrate foe. Chela Asanpa sat still with a dogged expression on his weather-beaten visage. Brara held out his hands which Chela Asanpa grasped most heartily with boyish candour. Chela Asanpa was not embittered by the unexpected defeat ; nor was Brara unduly flushed with victory. Both took the outcome in a sportsmanlike manner, praising each other's great strength and fair play. The defeat was extraordinarily well-suited to Chela Asanpa to produce the verve which is necessary for the impending armed duel against Brara.

The victor and the vanquished quenched their thirst from a big pitcher of rice-beer which Brara had thoughtfully brought along for the purpose. Then, hand in hand the two gigantic men went down to the clear stream to bathe. After that they went home and had a hearty meal of rice-beer and *fowl-kazi*.

Brara requested his guest to prolong his stay in his house. Chela Asanpa willingly complied with this request. The host killed two more fat bulls for the night's meal. They ate and drank until late at night. During their feasting they joked and discussed matters of common interest.

"What do you think will become of us if we both die together?" asked Chela Asanpa at random.

Brara answered, "Why, our spirits will travel together to the

spirit-land, there to stay for a while until they are reborn into this world in some other form, most probably human. Our bodies will become part and parcel of the elements of the earth. But let us not discuss such serious things."

"Now, let me ask you some questions," continued Brara. "What would you do if someone, as strong as yourself, laid claim to your wife and persistently told you that you should marry your own mother-in-law instead?"

With a genial smile Chela Asanpa replied,

"Oh, I would kill the fellow outright and send his head to my mother-in-law. The best way to end a quarrel is to kill your enemy."

It was quite late when the two great men retired. Early next morning Brara killed thirty-seven cocks, twenty hens and fourteen ducks for their morning's meal and procured more rice-beer from the house of one of his maternal aunts. Soon after his meal, Chela Asanpa prepared to start for home. He said to Brara :

"Misi Susime must envy your extraordinary bounty and unwavering generosity. I have eaten and drunk more in your house than I have ever done in any other house throughout all my adventurous ramblings. You have my best regards. I heartily thank you for your unstinted hospitality. Do not forget to come to my village the day after tomorrow for our duel. Bring your *milam* and *spi*. I shall come forward to meet you. Be sure to come and you will either return here with my head in your hands or leave your own with me. What greater pleasure can we derive from our association with each other than to live like two congenial friends at one time and two generous foes at another as circumstances demand."

Brara courteously answered : "You are not far from flattery when you speak of my generosity. I have but given you what is due to an honoured guest as enjoined by our custom. I am not at all satisfied with what I have done for you. Please do not mention it anymore. You have my highest esteem. Go in peace and wait for me. I'll meet you the day after tomorrow as agreed upon. Then it will mean that either I shall leave my head in your hands or bring your head triumphantly here."

On the morning of the appointed day, Brara killed two fat bulls and brought out two pitcherfuls of rice-beer for the day's

dinner. For the purpose of divining the outcome of the forthcoming duel, he killed seven of his biggest cocks. After examining the entrails of the fowls, he grumbled to himself.

"What is the meaning of this? The divination does not betoken fair auspices. Well, should that be the case, let it be. Death, which comes but once, is nothing more than a ceasing of breath. Come what will, I must go forth without bother."

Brara sharpened his *milam* with special care and rubbed his *spi* diligently. With apparent cheerfulness he partook of his meal in normal fashion. Afterwards, his aged mother said to him :

"Come, my son, let me trim your long, glossy hair with a mother's loving care. Go forth with your mother's blessings. I am confident of your victory."

Attired in shining purple silk, with hair well-trimmed, with *milam* and *spi* in hand, and with a company of eight servants bearing food and drink, Brara started forth along the path leading to Chela Asanpa's village.

In the meantime Chela Asanpa had his morning's repast and was waiting impatiently for the coming duel. His divination had shown success in his favour and he was in high spirits. Finally, he got up, seized his *milam* and *spi* and started out to meet his opponent. He lay in wait for Brara behind a gigantic *simul* tree (*Bombax malabaricum*) that stood on the way.

As Brara trod along, he espied the self-same *simul* tree behind which his enemy was waiting and muttered to himself : "It must be behind such a tree as this that Chela Asanpa is hiding." With that he struck the tree with his *milam*. The sword deeply penetrated the trunk of the tree and could not be easily withdrawn. Brara used both hands in an attempt to extricate the weapon. Just then Chela Asanpa nimbly leaped out of his hiding place and struck a savage blow at Brara's neck, saying :

"In reality you aimed at me ; but luck was with me and the good tree shielded me. Down with you."

Brara's head was completely severed and fell with a thud on the ground. Chela Asanpa picked it up, held it aloft and cried out triumphantly :

"Ka Shangma, Ebang, Geora, Gualgija, Jajagija ; Rakgipa, Gisilgipa, Wahsagipa ; Ka Shangma Goera ; Hei-Wao." That is, "Shangma am I, Of Ebang (heroic) Clan, Geera (the God of Thunder and Lightning), Unerring, Unhesitating, Strong, Steely,

Sterling am I; Shangma Goera am I; Heiwao (a shout of triumph)."

In terrified silence the eight servants of Brara watched the demise of their beloved and brave master. One of them at once ran home and informed Brara's mother of her son's sudden death. She exclaimed :

"I cannot believe it. Who would beat down my heroic son, the ever-wary, the ever-vigilant *dohmisal*¹⁰ (russet-coloured jungle-cock), whose hair was so well-groomed by me when I sent him away to battle with my blessing? There is none so cruel."

The poor distraught woman, however, had to admit the grim reality of the servants words when she beheld the other servants bearing Brara's headless body on an improvised bamboo-stretcher.

And so it happened that Brave Son of Nongchram, Brara the Strong One, died at the age of forty-nine. He had possessed more influence than any other man at Nongchram and the regions round about. He had always been admired, beloved and trusted by all. His death was mourned by all.

As for Chela Asanpa, he continued to dwell at his village, venturing far and wide from time to time, as was his wont, in search of strong individuals with whom he wished to measure his own enormous strength. He continued to slay at random many wild, treacherous beasts, such as tigers, bears, boars, elephants and buffaloes. No enemy conquered him. And he lived to die a natural death in his ripe age.

—Told by Bising Momin Gabil-Darugre
at Darang-Dura, District Garo Hills.

DELONG

Among the Achiks in Achik Asong there lived in ancient days a youth named Delong. He dwelt at the ancient village of Ronga near which was an extensive primitive forest. Strange sounds and noises like the beating of drums and gongs or the distant roar of thunder, or sometimes even like the wailing and shouting of human beings, were occasionally heard coming from the depths of this unexplored forest.

There was an old legend current which maintained that the forest was once haunted by fairies, elves, spirits and strange manlike creatures. In fact, so many terrifying stories were circulated concerning the unknown place that no human being could dare penetrate it.

Now, Delong was a quiet, unassuming young man. He was healthy and moderately good-looking. He loved life passionately and lived close to nature. He had a shrewd mind for the primitive realities of life. He was pure in heart, fearless and honest in words and deeds. A great desire to explore the forest that remained veiled in mystery so long, now seized him.

With a view to carrying out his plan to explore the forest alone, Delong dressed himself in deerskin and equipped himself with an axe, a pot, a leather bag filled with provisions, salt to last him several days, a *dao*, a set of flintstones, some floss of *Careya Urens*, and a piece of steel to kindle fire. Then he told his parents his plan for an excursion into the unknown forest. They tried their best to deter him from his resolve, but with no success.

With a brave heart and a clear conscience, Delong started out alone for the forest. As he entered it, wild beasts looked at him curiously, but did him no harm. They did not even display the least hostility towards the intruder. The Achiks firmly believe that wild beasts will never molest or kill people who live perfectly pure, honest and fearless lives. They bear love and kindly thoughts towards such persons.

In the beginning man created by Janggini Nokgipa Jemani Biambi,¹ the source of life and breath to be eaten by wild beasts and other harmful creatures, but to rule over and control all

animate and inanimate beings. Now, beasts, being part of living nature, instinctively know and respect persons who lead stainless lives, true to nature. On the other hand, they look upon as despicable enemies those people who violate nature's ways and who are recalcitrant to their own true selves. These latter are permitted by Kalkame Kalgra² to be killed and devoured by wild beasts and other harmful creatures.

This is the Achik belief concerning wild beasts. Delong knew of it, too. As he was pure and spotless he had no fear of the animals he encountered in his perilous trek. He was at ease in the forest. He did not feel frightened. He found the green gloom inviting. He came into a comfortable sense of kinship with all jungle creatures. So, bravely, he wandered on through the forest undaunted and unscathed past the staring wild beasts. The big tawny striped tigers cast seemingly ferocious glances at him, but let him pass unharmed. The lordly elephants broke through the trees, eating leaves ; but they stood motionless when they saw Delong. The long-horned black buffaloes and white-horned lusty bisons, dwellers of the dense jungle, when they saw him, emitted clouds of steam through their nostrils, but let him pass by without trouble. The mud-clad wild boar, with bristling long hair on the ridge of its back, and one-horned rhinoceros snorted once or twice at the sight of the explorer, but let him proceed on his way. The fierce panthers, leopards, grey wolves merely held their breath, and let him go on. The crooked bear, when it saw him, stood on its hind legs, quizzically opened its swine-shaped jaws and merely sniffed in his direction. The magnificent stag, with superb branching horns, was no whit terrified by his presence, but saw him with indifference, merely turning his alert ears towards the newcomer. The muntjac barked out once or twice, stamping its feet on the ground vigorously and then stared at him unafraid. The pythons, and venomous serpents, like the king cobras and kraits simply hissed and remained still when they saw him. The swift wild birds flew past him without fear. In fine, in seeing the pure and fearless Delong, all creatures—animals, birds and snakes—displayed neither signs of enmity, antipathy, nor fear towards him. They regarded him as if he had long before tamed them all.

So Delong went deeper and deeper into the forest. As he did so, he found unparalleled delight in the beauty and grandeur

of the tall, gigantic trees. Under these trees was a world, exquisite by itself and teeming with ferns, flowers and plants of the country about. On his trek Delong discovered unfamiliar creatures dart across his path and flit nimbly by him. Overhead, bees, wasps, hornets, beetles and other insects droned past him. They did not fear his presence; but on the contrary, showed unmistakable delight in being noticed by the traveller.

As he pushed onward, Delong came across, here and there, limpid streams gently meandering over a bed of pebbles and multishaped smooth stones. He also encountered many clear springs and rivulets near which he used to encamp at night, sleeping comfortably on a bed of leaves without the least fear of harm.

With the break of day, intrepid Delong would be once more afoot with joy in his heart; for the forest itself was full of delightful sounds to cheer him up, the songs of birds and the chirping and buzzing of insects. The music of the birds at day-break was, to him, a never-ending delight. The sharp, clear, hilarious cry of the huluk apes crowded together in the leafy branches of tall trees, would by no means allow a sense of loneliness to creep into his heart. The thought came to the explorer that in the wild woods there was no room for feelings of evil and wickedness.

On his travels, Delong, of course, had to cook his meals. His fare was not very elaborate. He caught fish, prawns and crabs in the clear stony streams, boiled them with salt and chillies and ate them with great relish. This was his favourite fare, but by no means his only one. For Delong found plenty of edible roots, vegetables and fruit in the expansive forest. Various wild fruits with which he was not familiar and which might be poisonous, were tasted by him after he had ascertained their harmlessness in a novel way. He watched the long-tailed langur eat fruits. What they ate, he ate, what they declined, he declined. And so he discovered that any wild fruit which was good enough and rich in health-giving elements for the langur was all right for him, too.

After some fourteen days of lone wandering through the deep forest, Delong came into a wide open valley. The rolling expanse was covered with dense, short grass, shrubs and bushes. Wild lilies and other woodland flowers grew there in plenty. In the middle of the delightful scene was a flat-topped hillock

covered with dense ancient woods. The northern side of the hillock gently sloped down to a small, deep, placid lake in the valley. Its remaining sides were lined with inaccessible, impregnable rocks, rising abruptly and ending with a frowning peak on the south. The deep clear lake spread itself on towards the north-eastern side of the hillock. The shimmering waters of the lake gleamed under the sun; for it was a bright spring day, the sky was cloudless and turquoise blue. Into the lake sparkling cold water poured down from the perennial rock-springs on the flat top of the hillock whose verdant foliage was extremely pleasing to the eye.

Delong, seated at a convenient spot, gazed long and thoughtfully at the beauty and grandeur surrounding him, especially the peaceful valley fringed with green woods all around. The perfume wafted from the innumerable flowers was something he had never before known. The sky above was serene. A gentle zephyr began to blow. Delong noticed it all. The solitary hillock in the centre of the valley appeared in all its Elysian beauty, as if it had been designed by some deity to be the abode of a beauty-loving nymph or a naiad. The charm of it overwhelmed Delong, and he resolved to climb it to discover its concealed wonders.

So, having refreshed himself by a bath in a nearby spring and by his midday meal which he diligently prepared, blemishless and fearless Delong started across the valley towards the lake, making his way as best as he could through the tangled herbs, plants, and flowers which impregnated the air with rich perfume. His path was strewn with petals of beautiful flowers, dropped off their delicate stems as he pushed against them. Finally, he reached the foot of the hillock where the tiny ripples of the lake caressed the base of the sloping rocks.

Delong's brain was alert and his steps firm and cautious, especially as, with pulsating heart and cheerful spirit, he mounted the slope of the hillock. Soon he arrived at the summit—a flat piece of soft-soiled, wooded land protected by ramparts of rocks. The top of the peak now appeared like the back of a huge, upturned brass gong. As he continued onward into the middle of this elevated plain, he beheld three massive rocks standing on the border of a little meadow. Three small rills issued from the crevices of the rocks and flowing by devious channels, fell serenely into the beautiful lake below. Delong

penetrated further. As he moved in the direction of the big rocks, a jet black dog sauntered forth from one of the caverns between the rocks and greeted him with an ugly menacing snarl. DeLong prepared to defend himself. Then suddenly a good-looking, dark-skinned young girl came running forward and hailed the dog in a sweet commanding voice. For a moment the beast stood still in sullen obedience to the girl's command; then it began to slink backward with its tail between its legs.

The damsel boldly advanced towards the youth and stared at him in wild amazement. DeLong was no more astonished to see her than she was to find him intruding upon her habitation.

"What makes you come to this abode of the Queen of Herbs and Plants?" she demanded suddenly, but not in any angry voice.

DeLong answered: "My simple love of adventure brought me here, fair one."

"Come, let me take you to the recess of our Queen," said the girl, turning to go and beckoning him to follow her.

DeLong followed her obediently and trustfully. They entered the cavern and passed through a corridor lined with rocks scintillating with precious stones of the rarest kind. They walked on and presently reached a spacious hall, seven hundred paces distant from the entrance of the cavern. In the bejewelled walls of this hall there were several openings of such a nature as to betoken the weird and mysterious character of its owner. In the middle of the hall was a jet of pure water which spurted freely out of the ground and made its exit at the entrance along a small ditch on one side of the rock-lined corridor.

This small jet of pure water was but a neutralized thermal spring mingled with the health-giving elements of mineral substances lying within the depths of the rocks below. Immediately beneath the surface, the fountain gushed up over the roots of valuable underground herbs, the chief of which were known as *Ahning Samtha Gisim* or *Kalanggea* and *Sulingji*. The water of the fountain was warm to touch, but cool and refreshing to drink. All sorts of diseases to which the human flesh is heir were instantly cured by one gentle quaff of the healing water. The valuable underground herbs grew hidden round the spring in the subterranean layers because by their shy nature they automatically shrink from human approach or touch.

Delong's guide, the good-looking, dark-skinned damsel told him to sit on a nearby seat of flint which was completely inset in a mysterious fashion with brilliant diamonds, pearls, garnets, rubies, onyxes, beryls, emeralds and sapphire. The legs of the seat were made of platinum.

As he was quite thirsty from his recent climb, Delong could not forbear beseeching the girl to allow him to quench his thirst at the fountain before him. Ere the girl gave him answer, another fair-complexioned maiden of wonderful beauty and grace suddenly appeared. She was magnificently attired in clothes made from the silken fibre of plants and decked with sundry fresh star-like flowers. She was taller and more dignified than the girl who had first greeted Delong. The marvellous charm, unparalleled beauty and courtly deportment of this maiden so astounded the young adventurer that for a while he was utterly incapable of speaking a word. He was completely dumbstruck.

This maiden, whom Delong so unexpectedly encountered in the spacious hall, was none other than the *Queen of Herbs and Plants*, the Goddess-Physician, the proud owner of the wondrous hillock and of the *Garden-Herb* on it. Recovering slowly from his stupor and surprise and summoning up all his courage, Delong essayed to address the mysterious lady, but she bade him to be silent. For this *Queen of Herbs and Plants* possessed secret knowledge; but she was no witch. As if in a panorama, she could read the past, the present and the future thoughts and feelings of any person. At the sight of Delong, she peered into the hidden depths of his soul, and knew instantly everything of his past, present and future life. Therefore, it was absolutely unnecessary for the young adventurer to relate to her any of his past experiences, his present needs, thoughts and desires, and his plans for the future. Delong had but to be a mute listener to her words. Had his mind been perfectly receptive to stimulus, she would have communicated to him in silence; for just as there was invisible colour, so there was inaudible sound. However, at that stage of Delong's development, the Queen was compelled to convey knowledge to him through the medium of speech.

So, the beautiful Queen assured the brave young man that he was perfectly safe in her cavern home. She then gave him a tiny globule to swallow. As soon as he had done so, Delong was astonished to find himself instantly freed from pangs of hunger

and thirst. He felt ecstatically happy at this sudden change. He experienced a strange phenomenon passing through his whole being as he sat entranced on the bejewelled chair of flint, listening to the Queen's words with rapt attention.

Now this *Queen of Herbs and Plants* had two gardens on the rich, loamy top of the hillock, one to the East and the other to the West of her cavern home. She herself thoroughly understood all the potent virtues and marvellous powers of the numberless herbs and plants of the world. So, the garden on the East contained rare herbs, plants and tuberous creepers which could be used as infallible remedies for all diseases, as well as never-failing aids in the performance of many a miracle. The garden on the West was full of powerful poisonous herbs and plants which, at the discretion of the possessor, could be used in doing much evil as well as good in the world. All existing rare herbs and plants of the whole world were collected, grown, tended, and nursed carefully in these two gardens.

As it was late, the Queen assigned to Delong a cosy nook in the cavern where he should spend the night. As his heart was at peace and his anxiety assuaged, he slept serenely until dawn. During his sleep he dreamt that he was residing with a benign young nymph in a celestial home which lay between two unexplored jungles.

Next morning the gracious *Queen of Herbs and Plants* offered her guest an insignificant quantity of certain food and drink, of which he had no previous knowledge, but which quite satiated him. In his heart he thanked his hostess for the unknown repast of limited quantity. Then the good Queen took him to the garden on the East and showed him some herbs and plants of marvellous powers and virtues. Near the entrance to this garden was a perennial plant bearing exquisitely fine and small grains which was known as *Dikge³ Mijanggi*. One tiny seed of this plant, if dipped into water and swallowed, could dispel the most acute hunger and thirst.

The following were the chief herbs and plants which the gracious Queen disclosed to Delong in the garden on the East during the first day of his visit :—

Different varieties of *Dikge Konduli*, one variety of which could control human beings, animals and the spirits of the world.

By its aid a herbalist from a certain distance could make persons or things immovable at his will.

Dikge Khatchi—by which one could see persons, things and events in distant places.

Dikge Kamal—by which one could detect things or hidden goods on another person's body.

Dikge Pongbret—by which anything hard or solid could easily be made to break or any foreign matter could be extricated from human bodies.

Dikge Meseng—by which any injurious effects of all sorts of poisons could be nullified or any poison, which had already got inside a human being, made ineffective. It was a never-failing antidote against poisoning of any kind.

Dikge Rejanggi—by which life could be revived, if the vital organs of a body had not been irreparably injured. It looked like a tiny thorny cane of considerable length. It was always seen moving by itself as if it had life in itself. It was also a great reviver of debilitated or emaciated bodies.

Dikge Mongera or *Bongera*—by means of which a man could irresistibly attract any girl or woman towards himself. It was highly aphrodisiac. It was lover's infallible delight. There was an antidotal herb, to counteract the potency of this herb, nearby.

Dikge Janera—by which opaque objects could be rendered transparent. Nothing could be hidden from the eyes of its possessor, whose gaze, by its aid, became all-penetrating.

Dikge Dohdikge—by which a man could increase his personal magnetism, and could dispel the anger, hatred or antipathy of any person who stood against him.

Dikge Mongma—by which, elephants, even wild ones, could be easily controlled.

Dikge Matcha—by which tigers could be brought completely under human domination.

Dikge Chipu—by which all sorts of snakes could be controlled and their bites rendered harmless.

Dikge Anggal—a jet black herb, which rendered the ground on which it grew coal-black. By discreet use of this herb along with certain other ingredients, one could make one's self completely invisible at his sweet will.

Dikge Muni—one of the iridaceae, a blood-red herb, by

which persons or animals could be induced into a deep sleep at any moment and for any length of time as desired by its possessor. There was an antidotal herb to counteract its potency hard by.

Dikge Anchi—a crimson herb, the juice of which looked like human blood. When taken internally, it could enrich the blood and lend unusual glow of health and strength to the human body.

Dikge Jongmisi—by which all types of leprosy could be cured instantly.

Dikge Aringga—by the aid of which a man could remain under water for any length of time. Its possessor could also control aquatic creatures such as crocodiles, alligators or gavials, eels and water-snakes.

Samtha Gisim—a jet black creeper with coal-black tubers, oval-shaped and spotted on the cover, which could cure all fell diseases and restore health and strength to the user. It could rejuvenate the old and increase vitality and energy.

Kalaagea or *Gun Raj*—a potent plant, by which all blood impurities could be banished from the human system.

Different varieties of *Pannet* or *Basil* (*coyenum sanctum*), one variety of which, jet black in colour, could dispel shadows of persons and things even in the garish light of the sun.

Sammokbrang—by which dismembered limbs of human beings could be rejoined and made whole.

Sambilmong—by which a person could retain in his body the strength and energy of more than thirty elephants.

Dikge Achak—by which dogs could be kept under perfect control.

Different varieties of *Dikge Chisik*, the black or red varieties of which could be used for curing diseases and guarding against sinister influences of evil persons, spirits and elephants.

Dikge Angosi—by the aid of which a person could keep his body perfectly dry in water or a shower of rain.

Dikge Gadela—by means of which a person could walk through heavy rain without getting drenched by rain-water.

Different varieties of *Dikge Jakriting*—the red variety of which could cause persons of different natures and of opposite sexes to become good friends.

Tahsaljong Gisim—a creeper with jet-black tuberous roots, a potent strength-giver and blood purifier.

Dikge Walshare—by which a person could see in the darkness of night as in the light of day.

Samdilma (bohenia anguina)—a spotted creeper, which could be used in creating illusions of sight and sound.

Dikge Rasin—an extremely aromatic herb, which could be used to placate wild animals.

Besides the array of names cursorily cited above, there were many herbs, plants and creepers of great potency in this garden on the East. Some of these herbs, plants and creepers, either by themselves or in proportionate combination with other ingredients, could be used to make human beings and things invisible, to make very light things heavy and very heavy objects light as feather, to increase quantities of wealth and other things, to decrease quantities of things or make them disappear altogether, to magnify very small things and render small things huge, to aid persons to discover hidden things and to understand visions, previsions, premonitions and dreams, to secure the death of any person from a distance, to enable one to travel in any of the fourteen worlds at will, and so on. The Queen alone knew all the strange and infallible virtues of all the herbs, plants, creepers and trees growing luxuriantly in this mysterious garden.

On the third day of Delong's stay, the Queen gave him a dried root and said :

"Take this root with you and sniff it whenever you feel the suffocating effect of the poisonous smell of certain harmful herbs and plants. Come, let us go to the garden on the West.

They entered into the harbarium through a narrow opening in the rocks which was kept blocked by a heavy flat stone. This garden was full of different varieties of herbs, plants, creepers and shrubs. Some of these possessed poison and acid of extraordinary potency. The most powerful of all the poisonous herbs and plants in this garden was called *Mahadebni Sambisi* or *Mohanilokanto*—the very smell of which was enough to kill human beings and animals. No person could touch it and live ; neither could any living thing breathe air in its vicinity and live. The smell of it alone was enough to choke any living thing to death.

The Queen now showed Delong innumerable herbs and plants in this garden on the West and explained to him what latent power each contained. The following were some of the

herbs and plants in this place with which Delong became acquainted.

Different varieties of *Dikge Bisi*—one variety of which was so strong that a handful of its powder thrown into a river could kill all the water animals in it over a long stretch.

Different varieties of *Dikge Skal*, *Dikge Wakme Bisi* and *Bisi-Bol*—the roots of which could be ground into power and used to poison human beings and all sorts of animals.

Different varieties of *Tinsiras* or *Jakritchus*—poisonous cactuses, poisonous arums (*colocasia indica*), yams (*discosea*), poisonous tuberous creepers and small plants bearing poisonous grains were also growing there. The red variety of *Tinsiras* was of such potency that its juice could melt steel and turn it into gold.

Dikge Chipubisi—a poisonous herb which was as fatal as the venom of the most deadly snake.

Dikge Sikdep, *Dikge Khore* and *Dikge Salmisi*—poisonous plants, by means of which persons and animals could be deprived of life at once.

There were numberless species of herbs, plants, creepers and shrubs in both the gardens which the good Queen did not disclose to Delong. However, she did call his attention to an age-old tree on the top of the hillock. The branches of this hoary tree were laden with various orchids, bearing flowers of all known colours in the world. Some of them bloomed all the year round, while others lasted only six to nine months in an year.

Delong remained with the *Queen of Plants* for many days more. Life was sweet and delightful in this blessed abode; for he could safely cast off his mind every earthly care and worry. He had already mastered some of the secrets of the herbs and plants. But as the Queen deemed him yet unfit to receive exhaustive knowledge of all the herbs, plants, creepers and shrubs in her gardens, she wisely withheld some of them from his sight. But even those which had been disclosed to him, Delong found extremely wonderful and fascinating. There was no cooking of food by fire in the abode of the Queen. All kinds of cooking and boiling were done by means of the heat of the sun, which could be stored and used even on cloudy days.

After days had run into weeks and weeks into months, Delong felt somewhat homesick. The Queen discerned his feelings, but prevailed upon him to remain for some days more.

To keep his mind occupied in the study of the secrets of the herbs and plants, she revealed to him the nature of some rude herbs well. However, when the thunder began to rumble, when lightning illuminated the sky and the earth with brief brilliance and when the clouds changed from mere white fleeces into dark massive blankets Delong was definitely reminded that the rains were coming and that it was time for him to help his parents at home in the important task of weeding out the *Jhum-Kheti* fields.

By again reading his feelings aright, the Queen knew that Delong's yearning for home was very great. So she decided not to detain him any longer. Indeed, she commanded her maid servant to fill up the youngman's leather bag with the roots and seeds of various herbs, plants, creepers, and other species of flora, poisonous and non-poisonous. Giving Delong the bag thus filled to the brim with roots and seeds, the Queen most gently bade him return home. She advised him to grow the roots and the seeds in a garden specially prepared by himself. Just as he was about to start out on his homeward journey, the benevolent Queen gave Delong a root of the rarest kind of *Dikge Kamal* by the aid of which he could easily find his way back to his native village by the shortest possible route.

Delong's parents, who had been overcome with grief at his delay in returning from the mysterious forest, were ecstatically delighted to get him back. They shrewdly noticed the leather bag which he brought with him, but had no means of discerning what it contained.

The next morning Delong disappeared into the forest with his leather bag, a *dao* and a hoe. But he did not disclose to anyone what his purpose was. In the forest he cleared a site, divided it into two equal plots, carefully sorted his precious roots and seeds and planted them carefully in the soil. With bamboo and wooden spike, he securely fenced his newly made garden. Then he quietly returned home.

His parents and relations heckled him with questions concerning his absence in the forest for so many days. Delong well understood their curiosity in respect of his solitary excursion into the weird forest, and although their queries were quite irksome to him, he did not reveal his experiences. He simply gave his inquirers quiet, evasive replies, not letting fall even an iota of information about his memorable visit to the *Cavern of the*

Mysterious Queen of Herbs and Plants. He was delighted to find that the garden was flourishing day after day.

In the course of time, Delong proved a blessing to the people. Besides helping his own parents in their planting and cultivating, he assisted his fellow-villagers by means of herbs and plants of which he alone had full knowledge. By intelligent and judicious application of these, he cured all sorts of diseases. He even used some of his most harmless herbs and plants to counteract the most deadly poisons, and thus rid his friends of the most acute diseases. Ere long he was known throughout the length and breadth of the country as a great physician. Yet, for his splendid services, Delong would take no reward from the sick and the afflicted whom he had healed. So people loved and respected him as a genuine philanthropist.

Though he had many occasions to do so, Delong never married. As a self-respecting bachelor, he lived indifferent to pleasure and pain, happiness and misery. He spent all his time and energy in the cultivation of his beloved herbs and plants, and soon became a renowned herbalist.

Now, Delong had a faithful friend, named Neurot to whom alone he decided to impart his knowledge of herbs and plants. Neurot, a married and worldly man admired the saintly character and blameless ways of his beloved friend, Delong. The latter entrusted his garden of herbs and plants to Neurot and caused him to become intensely interested in them. He also was Delong's confidant concerning his visit to the hillock of the *Queen of Herbs and Plants*. Naturally, Neurot became interested in this wonderful place and earnestly entreated his friend to take him to the remarkable hillock and introduce him to the mysterious Queen. Delong agreed.

Three years had by then elapsed since Delong's first acquaintance with the charming owner of the hillock; so he felt supremely happy at the thought of a second visit to her delightful abode. By means of the same rare root which the good Queen had given him on his previous visit, Delong was able with little difficulty to find his way to the valley wherein stood the majestic, hillock.

The *Queen of Herbs and Plants*, beholding Delong approaching her dwelling with a stranger despatched her maid-servant with

a message to him. The latter addressed Delong in the following words :

"You are bringing a friend with you. As he is married and encumbered with worldly interests, he cannot by any means ascend the hillock to the abode of the *Queen of Herbs and Plants*. You must leave him where he is and come alone. He will have to find his way back by himself. Give him the pathfinder, the root which was given previously to you and he will find his way home without difficulty. Don't you know that this hillock is charmed ? No defiled person can ever ascend it."

Neurot too heard the maid-servant's address with manifest disappointment. Delong conveyed to him his great sorrow at this unexpected turn of events. But the Queen's message was definite and final. Advising Neurot to be of good cheer and to be true to him, Delong gave him the pathfinder, fondly embraced him and ascended the hillock alone. Disappointed Neurot returned home in great sorrow.

Many years passed, and, as Delong did not return to his native village, Neurot could not resist the temptation to go into the forest himself in search of the charmed hillock. He eventually reached the fringe of what he clearly remembered to be the valley, in the midst of which had stood the grand, majestic hillock. But it was now nowhere in sight. Neurot debated the absence of the wonderful hillock with himself. Had it, perhaps, been removed by some unknown power, inhabitants and all, to some distant place beyond human ken ? Had it been rendered invisible to sin-stained mortal eyes in order that human beings might not further harm themselves by the possession of the knowledge of rare and secret things which the hillock contained ? For, by sinister and clever application of the occult powers which the exclusive knowledge of the secrets preserved in the sanctuary on the hillock would bestow on him, an unscrupulous person. could make himself master of the whole world.

What little knowledge of the latent virtues of herbs and plants the Achik people now possess, has been handed down from generation to generation since the days of Neurot.

—Told by Srimati Nosal Shangma Rangmuthu
at Village Senabar (near Kamrup-Khetri),
District Kamrup.

DARAN AND OPSORA

A poor, healthy and honest peasant youth, named Daran, once went up a clear hill-stream, known as Chibok,¹ in Achik Asong, angling for fresh-water fish, called *nahrongs* (*mahseer*). After the last rains of the year, the stream was fresh, clear and pure because its source originated in the black adamantine rocks of Meminram Hills.² As this sparkling stream sallies forth into its rocky and stony channel downhill before falling into the Simsang River, it forms beautiful falls and cascades here and there and deep blue pools among the immense jagged rocks. One of the highest falls of this stream is known as *Chibok Dare*³ and is located on the western portion of the village-land of Dingrang-Bawegiri in Achik Asong. The pools contain thousands of fish of great variety.

As Daran angled up the stream alone wading in the beautiful pools flanked on both sides by tall primitive trees, he felt unusually happy and buoyant. His whole being was absorbed in the magnificent glory and grandeur surrounding him. In the lofty trees that grew on the slopes by the streams, birds of brilliant colours flitted merrily singing their joyful songs, squirrels bleeped out signals of bashful fear and large groups of huluk apes hilariously chanted their famous war-cries. In the stream itself the bright fishes darted enchantingly here and there between rocks and stones, seeking to conceal themselves in any nook or cranny they could find. But Daran was more anxious to enjoy the wood-land beauty than to catch many fish.

Directly above, the bright autumn sun was shining in all its glory. The sky itself was a turquoise blue. The aftermath of the year's rainy season was in evidence everywhere—in the bright plumage of the jungle fowls as they whirred overhead and in the nimble motion of the busy tailed squirrels as they leaped adroitly from tree to tree. Daran felt it, too, as he went up and up the precariously perched rocks and leaped lightly from stone to stone along the channel of the stream. He carried with him his *dao*, rod and line and a string of moderate-sized fish held together by a slit of bamboo.

At the upper stages of the stream, above the aforementioned

falls, bowered with gigantic trees, which were intertwined and rigged up with small-leaved creepers and verdant vines, as a wide clear pool situated among the adamantine rocks. The water of this pool was dark blue which connoted great depth. Out of it jutted sharp rocks, black and grey in colour. Daran stood still to gaze contentedly at this beautiful pool and its rock banks. His soul was simply intoxicated by the entrancing grandeur of the place. The tall trees, the fresh creepers, the green wild ferns were all clearly reflected in the still waters of the pool. In the water itself thousands of bright, nimble fish darted here and there in sheer blissfulness. Above, the birds sang sweetly. Such birds, such songs, such verdure, such scenery, such beauty ! The young man's heart almost split with happiness at the loveliness he experienced and understood. The pool seemed a fitting abode of fairies, nymphs and naiads. Daran seated himself on one of the many rocks and contemplated the peacefulness of the scene.

As he sat absorbed in thought, Daran suddenly became aware of the presence of another. He lifted his eyes to the opposite side of the pool and was astonished at what he beheld—a feminine figure of extraordinary beauty. The young man was struck dumb. He could neither speak nor move. All he could do was to gaze in rapture at the charming girl on the opposite bank. Who is she ? Where has she come from ? Has she come from a nearby village ? These are the questions that puzzled him. There was no village or habitation within miles of that place. He was well aware of that. He knew that the pool was in the most sequestered place in the whole land of Achik Asong. Then who was she and from where did she come ? Daran knew not the answer. All he could do was to watch with rapture the charming, bewitching maiden who was unaware of his presence. As he gazed at her the fair damsel attired in snow-white garments slowly disrobed, poised on a sharp rock, and suddenly dived into the water with exquisite gracefulness. She swam with ease in the cool pool, as her tender arms and legs moved with perfect harmony.

This damsel was one of the celestial personages known as *Opsoras*.⁴ Her name was Juge Balje, and her abode was in the ethereal regions. She could move through the air. She could make herself visible or invisible to human beings at will. As she swam sprightly around the delightful pool, she became conscious of the presence of a human being, but this did not seem

to affect her. She continued to swim and dive and float in sheer oblivion of everything except the cool crystal water in which she bathed so freely.

Daran grimly determined to get acquainted with this enchanting girl. He decided to hide her snow-white garments. For this purpose he began to climb with thumping heart to the place where her clothes lay. Crawling on his stomach he made his way quietly to his destination. His breath came heavily; his heart beat wildly. Conscience reproved him for his ungentlemanly behaviour; but he threw caution to the winds in order to get in touch with the irresistible creature. After what seemed to him like eons of time, he finally reached the place and snatched the girl's clothes. No sooner had he done this, than he heard a wild shriek from the pool. In a moment the girl was on the shore, clawing at him in a frantic effort to get back her garments, and crying out in rage at the youth's bad behaviour. The more angry she grew, the more beautiful she appeared to Daran. He smiled as she clawed and struck and scratched him. Her touch, however painful, was a balm to the pangs of his soul. He continued to hold the garments firmly behind him.

Realising the futility of her efforts, the damsel finally composed herself and asked with celestial calmness:

"What is the meaning of this? What do you want?"

Daran smiled and answered gently: "Your beauty has bewitched me. Give me but a plain promise that you will marry me. Tell me who you are and where you reside. Who are your relations? What set or clan do you belong to?"

With gentleness the damsel replied: "Marry you I will. I am one of the grand daughters of the Saka Misi Saljong, the ruler of the ethereal regions."

Daran promptly gave her back her clothes. They plighted their troth to each other. The irretrievable step had been taken; there could be no retracing now. Daran had committed himself; but he was supremely contented over the success of his venture. The celestial damsel then gave her fiance a white scarf and requested him to wear it constantly; for it endowed him with the power of floating above the ground and moving through the air on the manes of the wind just as she herself could.

The two lovers then wandered about the clouds. The damsel had made her lover invisible to the sight of mankind.

She, too, gave him some sweet-globules to satisfy his hunger and thirst, but as Daran felt little craving for earthly food and drink while he was in her celestial presence, he had little use of the dainty pills. He felt a happiness which he had never before known. Earthly delights and carnal desires vanished. Physical wants and ailments were no more. True, the fair damsel could in a moment produce him money, cloth, jewels, precious stones and many other worldly riches ; but he felt no use for these baubles. He found the happiness he wanted most in her celestial company. At night he felt himself sleeping on a sapphire bed in her mansion. Where this mansion was, he did not care to know. All material and earthly cares and anxiety had left him. He now experienced only supreme happiness and peacefulness.

Shortly after this, the damsel and Daran were formally married. They never tasted the joys of life on a carnal plane as mortal beings do. Instead, their delights were on a higher spiritual level. Daran's bliss came from being simply in her celestial company. In this was his ecstasy of happiness. For full seven years the two dwelt together in great peace and joy.

After this period of time had elapsed, the young man felt a great longing to see his own mother, father, brothers and sisters once more. So, he asked his celestial spouse to permit him to return to his native land. No sooner had he expressed this desire, than he felt himself being wafted earthward in her benign presence. In a moment he found himself on the threshold of his parent's house.

"How long are you going to stay here?" the celestial damsel inquired in a whisper.

"As long as I like," replied Daran, "but not more than three years at the most."

"Then I shall come to take you to our celestial home at the end of that period of time," concluded his spouse, just before vanishing into thin air instantaneously. Her departure was so sudden that Daran simply stood and looked at the spot from which she had so unexpectedly disappeared. He was still standing there, wrapt in thought, when his mother espied him and cried out bewildered :

"Am I dreaming? Is not this my son, my darling Daran, whom I have thought dead?"

She called her husband and children to come and see the

apparition. The voice of his mother aroused Daran from his reverie. Soon Daran was surrounded by his unbelieving parents and brothers and sisters. They all addressed him at the same time in sheer joy at finding him once more. Above the rest he heard the familiar musical voice of his younger sister, exclaiming :

"Brother, brother, where have you been so long? We've been shedding tears for you for these long years."

Daran came to himself. He looked with delight on his mother, father, brothers and sisters, and recognized them all perfectly. But he was tongue-tied. All he could manage to mutter out was :

"Let me go alone into the house and weep away my perplexities for a while."

Knowing by sense of touch that her son had really returned in flesh and blood, the thoughtful mother kindly led him into the house by the hand and left him to himself for some time. To her and his family Daran appeared more like a supernatural than a human being. His voice had changed ; his demeanour was noble and dignified ; his whole being radiated health, strength and energy ; his looks betrayed power and might. No one dared speak lightly to him. Now he was serious, thoughtful, earnest, taciturn and independent.

Soon Daran completely came to himself and was happy in finding himself surrounded once more by his family and friends. With joy he told them of his wonderful experiences of the past seven years, of his meeting and marriage with the celestial damsel, of the celestial region where he had dwelt, of his serene happiness and peace, of his blissful married life, of the unearthly beauty and power of his charming wife. They all listened to his narrative in pin-drop silence. His mother was sceptical. She concluded that her son must have fallen into a trance in a cave somewhere in the hills and had imagined all these wonderful things which he now told. So she asked him pointedly.

"If you've been married for seven years, where are your children? Where is this bewitching wife of yours?"

Daran could not answer. For the first time he realized that since his marriage with his spouse, all carnal desires had been at rest. His love and marriage had been solely on a spiritual plane. Still he felt perfectly happy in being her husband. What

did it matter if he were misunderstood? Others were not in a position to comprehend his experiences. Viewed from the earthly plane his was a meaningless tale. His listeners could not comprehend his narrative fully, since they measured it by the standards of the world. So he altogether ceased trying to make himself understood.

By and by Daran became familiar with those about him once more. He came to realize again the love of a mother, father, brother and sister. He wanted to return their love and affection as before. He deeply appreciated the simple joys and sorrows, the laughter and tears, of normal home life, even when viewed in the light of his past experience of unalloyed joy and happiness in the celestial mansions. He wished for some of the money, jewels, cloth and riches there, so that he could help his beloved ones materially; but he could not obtain it without the help of his celestial spouse. Now he was no longer able to raise himself from the ground, for his wife took back the white scarf she once bestowed on him the moment she left him at the threshold of his parent's home. He realised sadly, that he was earthbound as before and that the celestial damsel could cause a ruckus, had she so willed.

Some two years later Daran's mother engaged a lovely accomplished girl to be his wife. Although the memory of his former marriage was still fresh in his mind, the young man did not desist from showing affection for the earthly girl. He returned her furtive glances and shy smiles. Daran soon became conscious of the danger he was allowing himself to fall into; so he stopped paying attention to her. For months he diligently kept himself out of her sight. He would neither notice nor speak to her. His mother became aware of this change in her son's behaviour and urged the girl to woo him more determinedly, according to the customary practice of the race, known as *Akhim Gaa*. She herself promised to silently exert all the influence she could upon her son. Their united efforts greatly undermined the young man's resolve. Daran felt himself drifting into passive acquiescence. His heart began to give way. His resistance began to give way. To him it seemed that the bewitching eyes of his earthly wooer grew larger and larger, and merged into a pool of dark fire into which he was inevitably being drawn. In the glow of that fierce fire his determination and opposition melted like wax. At

length he yielded completely and consented to the marriage his mother so eagerly desired.

His married life revived in Daran all the physical and sensual appetite for the things of the world from which he had been so long free. He became a man of the world once more, delighting in mundane pleasures, totally forgetting the celestial delights he once relished. He became earthbound in more ways than one. Still he was happy in an earthly way ; and he felt that life would continue to bestow upon him such joy and bliss. But this was not to be ; for at the end of the third year of his descent to the earth, his celestial damsel appeared to him accompanied by three attendants or *pouries*.⁵

It happened one fair morning while Daran was sitting in front of his house with his wife who was holding their new-born baby in her arms. For a while the celestial damsel and her attendants simply floated about the young man and stared at him in wonder. Daran raised his eyes and beheld them. Suddenly like the opening of a floodgate, there rushed upon him memories of the past joys he knew and cherished. His heart sank in disillusionment when he realized how he had been twisted around an earthly woman's finger. He reeled in his seat as he realized what a fool he had been to consent to marry a human being. A haggard look came into his eyes and a bitter loathing of himself crept into his heart.

The sight of the damsel and her *pouries* was reserved for his eyes alone. Daran's earthly wife sitting with their child at his feet was totally unaware of the terrible crisis through which her husband was passing. The young man watched the face of his celestial spouse. He saw its look of surprise change into a sneer of scorn. Quickly he turned aside his eyes ; for he could not bear to meet the steady, penetrating censuring gaze of his celestial wife. As the full significance of what had happened occurred to him, he realized that it meant the end of his life. He looked at his person and noted with disgust how greatly it had deteriorated since his separation from his first spouse. The divine fibre had gone out of him. He was going the way of all flesh.

The celestial damsel still spoke nothing to him. She merely continued to stare at him hard and long. In an instant Daran saw the events of his whole life. He felt he was losing his senses.

His soul realizing that it could no longer stand the searching imperturbable gaze of the damsel, at last cried out in despair :

"I am not worthy. I am not worthy. Ah me."

With this horrible cry Daran toppled down dead at the feet of his earthly wife. She, being unable to see the celestial damsel and her attendants, could not understand why her beloved husband had suddenly looked wild, muttered some words of self-condemnation, and fallen down dead. She shrieked out in terror. Suddenly she was surrounded by Daran's whole family; but none of them could give a sensible explanation for his sudden demise. None of them had even seen his celestial wife. The invisibility of the damsel and her attendants was due to the existence of invisible colour and inaudible sound with which they had camouflaged themselves so successfully. Only Daran who was acquainted with their secrets was permitted to see and hear them. To the rest everything was shrouded in mystery.

The villagers built a funeral pyre and cremated the body of Daran. Some persons who took part in the funeral ceremony swore afterwards that they saw through the screen of smoke a group of fair damsels in snow-white garments appear there as the last portion of his body was consumed in the flames. Others claimed that they saw nothing.

To the end no one saw the real cause of the great tragedy. There was nothing tangible to suggest the liaison between Daran and the celestial damsel. The earthly wife of the deceased man did not live long. Soon she died of a broken heart.

—Told by Srimati Noati Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Dingrang-Bawegiri,
District Garo Hills.

MITHDEIBESA AND JINNEE

In olden days there was a big village, named Ronggutdugiri, on the top of the Mongre Hill in Achik Asong. Once there was born a child who became an extra-ordinary member of the Shangma matri-phratry. His parents were a conscientious couple, comparatively well off, and always managing to keep in easy circumstances. He was the seventh child in the family; but all the six born before him died in their infancy. Later another boy and girl were born. The parents loved the trio dearly. When the girl came of age, she was married to a splendid young man of the Marak matri-phratry of the tribe. She continued to be the heir of the house in conformity with the matri-lineal usage of the tribe.

From his early boyhood this seventh child was very fond of sacrificial ceremonies and ritual performances. He would often listen with profound interest to the devotional chants and prayers, the wild and mystic strains and invocations of the Achik priests to the Unseen Deity, known as *Mithdei*. More and more he imbibed a sacred yearning for the things of Nature and Divinity. Because of his outstanding interest in religious matters, his parents called him *Mithdeibesa*, which means "the Friend of the Deity."

Mithdeibesa was not subject to fierce passions. He eschewed the excesses of youth and turned to contemplation for comfort. By constant and persistent effort to think things out for himself, he became immersed in the world of thought and spirituality. He was a silent and reserved youth and soon began to evidence complete indifference to the world and its ordinary conventions. His mind was inquisitive and analytical. It was his custom to sound the 'whys' and 'hows' of things. At all times he essayed to find out the real meaning of words, their true connotation, their exact relation to the ideas to which they were applied. He ardently reasoned out everything that came within his ken.

As he grew older *Mithdeibesa* became ever more reserved, solitary and contemplative. His parents were quite alarmed at his unusual behaviour. So, when he reached the age of twenty-

seven they got him married to a beautiful and accomplished young woman of the Marak sept. It was their secret hope that the stern realities of married life would change him into a practical man of the world. Mithdeibesa was never lacking in conjugal happiness; but his attention was constantly fixed on the mysteries of birth and death, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. Occasional reprimands from his wife had little effect in making him give up his pensive mood.

Mithdeibesa maintained that there was neither good nor bad in the material sense. One day he overheard a group of villagers animatedly talking about a recent accident. A man had been burned to death in a house. The villagers said that the fire consumed both the house and the man like a mighty voracious monster. To Mithdeibesa their remarks sounded extremely superficial. He would not agree with such vulgar utterances. He said :

"Fire, as it is in itself, is neither a foe nor a friend; it is neither a ferocious monster nor a docile pet. Thinking alone makes fire or anything else appear bad or good."

Mithdeibesa also had an unshakeable faith in the belief that an unseen Force of Energy transcendent and immanent in all beings, worked all around and within him. He believed that time and space are both infinite. In the depths of his solitude he found for himself the romance of infinite space and infinite time.

One day Mithdeibesa saw the carcass of a wild boar. It had been killed by the villagers by means of a trap, known as *Wahdona* or *Wahsala*.²

"Where is gone," he asked himself, "the terrible strength, energy, ferocity, the very life that was once in this huge body of the wild bear? Is it lost or dissipated?"

"No," he found the answer himself. "It has returned to the substance out of which it was originally formed. It has gone to be what it once had been in quality and quantity. Nothing is absolutely lost; only the state of its existence is changed."

He pondered again the slain animal and remarked to himself: "Like this wild boar we all come into this world condemned to die in some way or other. What difference does a few years make?"

With the passing years thoughtful Mithdeibesa became more solitary and silent than ever. Often in the midst of his profound meditations he lost sight of himself, his wife and children. He

loved the latter most dearly ; but the humdrum of home life with all its ties galled him. His own parents had by this time died. And his younger brother had married and had gone away to a distant village to settle down. So he contemplated a change. There was no solace in worldly life which to him was stale and unprofitable. Being a householder himself proved a great impediment to his life-long desire of devoting himself to spiritual things. Therefore, he decided to leave his wife and children.

Now, it was not in keeping with Mithdeibesa's nature to leave his wife and children in a lurch. Therefore, for full seven years he laboured hard with tremendous tenacity to accumulate enough food, cloth and other supplies to last his wife and children for a long time to come. When that task was completed, Mithdeibesa was really ready to cut himself off from all worldly affairs and human ties which he found incompatible with his spiritual aspirations.

So, one night Mithdeibesa stole away from home, penetrated the primitive forest on the top of the Dura Hill,³ and remained there in a cave by the side of a sparkling stream which flowed serenely among the adamantine rocks. He did not take many household effects with him,—only a loin cloth, a *dao*, a piece of flint and a bit of powdery substance obtained from the palmyra tree. In his new abode Mithdeibesa lived on honey, edible roots, wild fruit and wild vegetables. He prepared his raiment out of the dried barks of trees. The beasts of the forest left him alone as if they realized that they had no reason to molest so detached a person.

At the outset of his ascetic life, Mithdeibesa had a hard tussle between his inborn love for his wife and children and his unquenchable desire to probe into the mysteries of life and divinity through unbroken, serene meditation. Meanwhile his neighbours vainly searched for him. Not knowing his inner feelings they rashly concluded that he had probably turned mad or a malignant spirit had led him out into the forest. After a time he was given up for lost.

In his solitude Mithdeibesa was accustomed to look up to the starry heavens at night and thoughtfully contemplate the infinity of space. He firmly believed in one overruling *Spirit*. He held that in reality the *Universe* is not a blind and meaningless

entity, but the visible manifestation of a Good, Intelligent, Loving Deity, known as Mithdei.

"O Thou, Ever-Living Spirit, who art immanent in water, fire, light, air, ether, on earth and in the starry heavens, in the wilderness of the worlds unknown, give me perfect peace of mind. Lead me ever forward to the fountain of Truth. Give me complete self-realisation in Thee."

Mithdeibesa prayed thus every morning and evening. The gentle murmur of the shallow stream over smooth rocks and stones besides him seemed to join with him in his heartfelt prayer. To him the unseen and the invisible in sweet nature all around was more real than the seen and the visible.

Now, one evening as Mithdeibesa was about to partake of his meagre evening meal, he heard a rustling sound from the nearby thick undergrowth. In the purple dimness of the tropical night, he seemed to see a shadowy, ghost-like figure coming towards him. Soon it was clearly visible and Mithdeibesa saw the colossal figure of a hairy, wild-looking man. He was as tall as the tallest trees and his massive body was stark naked. As befitting a holy man, he wore a dark, heavy beard. The hair of his head was raven black. Mithdeibesa silently and fearlessly watched the massive man approach and sit down beside him. He felt a strange feeling as the stranger took his place on the ground.

The colossal man was the materialized figure of a benign Spirit, known as *Jinnie*.⁴ This Spirit was one of the Immortals. It could make itself visible or invisible to human beings at will. It never willingly harmed any human being, but bore kindly thoughts towards mankind as a whole. But it loathed wicked persons. It could furnish money, jewels, precious stones and other things of intrinsic value as well as remedies for the most chronic diseases, from nowhere in the twinkling of an eye.

Mithdeibesa divided his food into two equal parts. The colossal being did not touch the meal set aside for him although he seemed pleased with his host's generosity. He merely sat in silence. Mithdeibesa found him exceedingly congenial and was not afraid at all. He began to speak familiarly with his guest. On the seventh day after the advent of the colossal apparition, Mithdeibesa addressed him thus :

"Whoever Thou art, I embrace Thee as my friend, guide and protector. I believe that Thou art a merciful Being."

The colossal apparition returned : "I am come to help thee. Not only can I bring thee messages and things from the remotest places in no time, but I can at once transport thee invisible wherever thou desirest to go. I can make thee visible to thy fellowmen at thy sweet will."

"I would like," said Mithdeibesa, "while keeping myself invisible to see my relations and friends once more."

No sooner had he uttered these words than the Spirit bodily transported him to his former home. He found his wife remarried to another man and muttered :

"It is her carnal desire that urged her to seek that husband or the combined creative urge of man and woman that brought them together. It's natural."

He next saw that his children were all well and happy ; and preferred to leave them undisturbed. Then the Spirit took him to the houses of all his relations and friends keeping himself invisible to them. They moved from one place to another in the twinkling of an eye. Finally, Mithdeibesa requested his guide to bring him back to his own cavern retreat. The kind Spirit did this and then went away. The next night the colossal figure came again, and when Mithdeibesa whispered to him shyly that he was feeling quite famished, Jinnee brought him in a moment the choicest fruits, some of which were out of season.

Now, one day three men from Mithdeibesa's village who had gone into the lonely forest in search of honey and bee-wax, incidentally arrived at the entrance of his hermitage. They had brought with them cooking utensils and provisions to last them several days, and were about to encamp at that place when they beheld Mithdeibesa sitting calmly and thoughtfully in the cave. The villagers readily identified him in spite of the fact that his life of asceticism had made him look more like a supernatural than a human being. At first the villagers were afraid to approach him because they imagined that he might be offended by their inadvertent intrusion upon his solitude. But Mithdeibesa, with a charming smile and a heartening gesture, bade them enter. Although, an anchorite, Mithdeibesa was not a misanthropist.

With his usual graciousness, Mithdeibesa persuaded the villagers to lodge with him for the night. He told them about

the benign Jinnee and bade them not to be frightened when he appeared. The villagers listened to Mithdeibesa's words with rapt attention and deference. They felt his personality, power and presence; and consented to stay with him for the night.

Mithdeibesa told his friends not to bother about preparing any evening meal. He said :

"You will have plenty of food to eat when Jinnee comes."

As the shades of evening were gently descending, the villagers heard a rustling sound coming towards the cave. They looked up and saw the majestic colossal figures with a bright halo of light around his head. At the sight they were profoundly impressed, and, in spite of themselves, terrified. Mithdeibesa kindly bade them be quiet and assured them that no harm would come to them. Then he introduced them to the colossal figure. After a few moments Mithdeibesa begged Jinnee to procure some food for his guests. As soon as he finished speaking, the ground was covered with choicest fruits. The group then partook of the delicious fare until they were all satiated. After that the villagers lay down to sleep in a beautiful glade just outside the cave. About midnight the group of travellers was suddenly awakened by Mithdeibesa's sonorous voice. He was discussing the things of eternity with Jinnee. The villagers pretended that they were fast asleep; but in reality they were carefully listening to the conversations of the two in the cave. They paid the greatest attention to what was being said; but they could not comprehend the discourse coming from the cave. At last the villagers concluded that Mithdeibesa and Jinnee were talking of such mysterious things of which they had no inkling at all.

As they continued their discussion on ultimate realities, Mithdeibesa felt a great change taking place within himself. Petty selfish aims slipped from him. He felt as if his yearning soul was about to reach the Infinite. He clearly realized that his body was but a particle of dust in the self-acting *Whole*. He asked Jinnee :

"Are there other people who have forsaken home, wife and children in search of Truth as I have done?"

"Yes," answered the Spirit, "there are such men."

"Where do they dwell and what do they do?" continued Mithdeibesa.

"They live in the wonderful solitary caves in the great

Chuma Mountains,⁵ the Mother of the Heights. They have ever been struggling to discover for themselves their eternal selves in relation to the Great Eternal Truth."

"Ah, I would like to join them there," exclaimed Mithdeibesa.

No sooner had he finished the last word of this spontaneous outburst than Mithdeibesa and the Spirit were no more. The former had at last attained his culminating apotheosis.

The villagers got up and lighted a fire. Mithdeibesa and Jinnee were nowhere to be seen. They had no idea where they had gone; but to them Mithdeibesa appeared greater in his disappearance than in his actual presence. So, when dawn came, the three villagers took their simple repast and hurried back to their native village. There they related to their fellowmen all the wonderful things they had witnessed and heard in the cavernous retreat on the Dura Hill in Achik Asong.

—Told by Gongsin Shangma Rongmuthu, Nokma
at Dinaminggiri, Garo Hills.

DAMPO

Among the Achiks in Achik Ason in the olden days, there lived a rich Chieftain, named Dampo. Although, according to the tribal custom, he was allowed to marry as many wives as he wished, he was perfectly satisfied with only one wife whom he dearly loved. He had only two children, a daughter and a son. But he had many servants and much property including vast fields of arable land and houses. He also possessed several hundred heads of cattle and various domestic animals.

Dampo had a weird gift whereby he could understand the conversations of animals, birds and insects. However, this gift could cause his immediate death the moment he divulged its power to anyone. Dampo was well aware of this fatal fact.

One night, as he lay awake in bed beside his wife, he overheard the following conversation between an ass and a bullock. The ass said :

"It is a pity to see you always toiling for our master. Listen to me ; and I will tell you how you can free yourself from this perpetual drudgery."

The bullock replied :

"I am really grateful to you. Pray tell me how it can be done, my friend."

"If you would like to keep from work tommorrow," continued the ass, "pretend that you are sick. Do not eat the fodder that is offered you in the morning. Droop your ears ; let gluey mucus trickle through your nostrils ; and remain dolefully looking down at the ground when the servants come take you off to be yoked to a plough."

The bullock assured the ass that he would readily follow this advice.

Dampo, still listening, condemned in his own mind the cunning ass for his downright trickery ; but he laughed aloud when he thought of the beast's resourcefulness. His wife promptly wanted to know the reason for his sudden outburst. To deceive her Dampo answered that he was merely laughing in his sleep. His wife remained quiet, but was not convinced by his reply.

Early next morning Dampo aroused his servants and ordered

them to give some provender to the bullocks ; and, before taking them to the plough, to carefully ascertain whether or not any one of them as ill. Presently, one of the servants came to him with the report that one of the bullocks was seriously sick. Dampo answered that the ploughing could not be stopped on that account ; but that the ass should be harnessed to the plough with one of the bullocks in lieu of the sick one.

The servant yoked the ass to the plough along with a bullock in place of the one which was left behind as sick. It was precisely the same ass which on the previous night had advised the bullock to play sick. He was now caught in a trap of his own making. Dampo laughed heartily to himself when he saw the ass yoked to the plough. The ordeal of dragging the heavy plough all day long in the sweltering heat of the summer was very trying for the tricked ass. His mental agony was greater when he realized that his companion, the bullock, was serenely tethered beneath the leafy boughs of a tree in a rich green pasture nearby and that all he had to do for the greater portion of the day was to munch rich, soft grass to his heart's content.

That night while Dampo was in bed again, he overheard another tete-a-tete between the same ass and the same bullock. The chastened ass now counselled the grateful bullock in the following strain.

"My dear companion, today I heard our master order one of his servants to cut off your head, if tomorrow morning you are not well. He believes that you are really ill. Our master and his servants are great beef-eaters, you know. Believe me, my good friend, you will be decapitated with a big *dao*, if you are not in good health by tomorrow. So, if you want to live, eat your provender greedily in the morning ; appear strong and sound when the servants come to take you to the plough ; be brisk ; arise and go with them at once. Only by so doing will your life be spared."

The credulous bullock consented to follow this wise admonition.

Dampo, thinking again of the strategy of the clever ass, could not check laughter which overcame him. He guffawed unrestrainedly until his sides ached. His wife looked askance at this second nightly outburst of mirth. Her curiosity and suspicion were aroused to a high pitch. She asked peevishly :

"Dearest Dampo, again you are laughing. What is the meaning of it? Do you see something funny about me to make you laugh so? What are you thinking about? You are hiding something from me, something which I ought to know. Tell me immediately what it is."

Dampo, however, remained stoically quiet; for he remembered the fate which would follow the revelation of his wonderful gift of understanding the conversations of beasts, birds and insects. Even though his wife continually pressed him with questions, he would not open his mouth. But his wife was not to be put off so easily. For three full months she daily and constantly nagged him on the score of his downright perverseness. At last she cried out:

"Your confidence in me is a farce. Your love for me is a pretence. You would have told me long ago the reason why you twice laughed at night had you respected me as your dutiful wife."

Now Dampo, being an upright, generous, and loyal person, loved his wife dearly. He also loved life and all the good things of the world. He did not want to jeopardize his own existence by making known his unusual gift. But he could not dangle for long on the horns of this dilemma. So, in a moment of vexation, he said to his wife:

"All right, I will reveal my secret and die. Prepare my last meal tomorrow morning according to the best of your culinary skill. After eating, I will tell you the secret you desire so much to know; then I shall die."

His wife took lightly the implication of death in Dampo's words. Not so his favourite dog, named Jomi, who had heard his master's solemn pledge. In his heart this faithful hound soundly cursed his importunate mistress and deeply lamented the prospect of his master's death.

Early next morning the dog lay motionless in front of the house with his jaw resting on the ground and his eyes cast down sadly. He would neither eat nor drink that morning. Presently the biggest russet-coloured lordly cock of the farm came rushing by in pursuit of his favourite hen. The hen in trying to avoid the cock, ran with a cackle over the crouching body of the dog, inadvertently planted one of her feet on his nose, and suddenly aroused him from his reverie. The cock, following close behind,

pitted his body against the dog. The dog snarled at the offender, saying :

"You damn boisterous cock. You dirty scoundrel ! What are you running about so wildly ? Have you no heart to feel for our master who is about to die, you filthy fowl ?"

The cock stopped short, flared up pugnaciously, and returned bitterly :

"You scummy cur ! You rabid hound. I won't stand your dirty language. I'll run about when and where I please. What's this talk about our master's death ? You mongrel ?"

The dog answered angrily. "You poor numskull ! You thick blockhead ! You always were a needle in matters human."

To which the cock replied with equal venom :

"You choleric cur ! You dyspeptic dog. You simply wallow in the delight of pouring out unjust tirades on my wretched head. You don't even know what you're talking about. Yonder, I see our master in sound health. How will he die ? Is he going to commit suicide ? You are a brazen liar, if you refuse to tell me why he is going to die."

The dog seeing that nothing good could come from such tirades, changed his tactics. He ignored the cock's insults, composed himself, assumed a softer and kindler mien, and said :

"Yesterday, I heard our master tell his wife that he would reveal a secret to her this morning and die. I have no idea what the secret is. But he will surely die, if he tells it. Now, have you no heart to feel for him ? Shall we not be helpless, if he dies."

The cock did not react very favourably to this calm speech. Instead he jumped about angrily, glared at the mournful dog, and sputtered in a tone savouring of hauteur :

"What kind of a man is our master anyhow ? He must be a jelly-fish to allow himself to be coerced into death by the impertinence of a woman. Indeed, he must be a despicable weakling to be so overruled by a woman. I myself have thirty or forty hens as my wives ; and I keep them all under perfect control. They are happy and contented. You see me the epitome of happiness. And our master, being a man, cannot control one measly woman. What kind of a man is he, I repeat ? Shameful, disgraceful, obnoxious. Were I he, I would have made her fully

aware of the fact that it is none of her business to pry into affairs which do not concern her in the least.

"And furthermore, my proud cur, don't fancy that I am to be freely insulted by a mere, lazy brute like you. Humph. All you ever do is to flaunt around our master in order to fill your beastly stomach. But away with me to my darling hens. Heigh ho!"

So saying, the ever cheerful and never much worried cock, strutted away and once more merrily began to pursue his fat fleeing hen. The deflated dog merely stretched out his forepaws, buried his head between them, and growled to himself:

"That impertinent cock is right in not appreciating our master's sad plight. It is all the result of his allowing himself to be ruled by a woman. Indeed, the good man ought not to allow himself to be tormented by his wife's importunities. He ought not permit himself to be so henpecked. A sound slap or two from him would perhaps have silenced her."

Dolefully the disturbed dog tried to disperse from his anxious mind all melancholic thoughts concerning his master's impending death.

Now, Dampo himself clearly overheard every word of the bitter squabble between his pet dog and the cock. He began to reflect on his own behaviour.

"What a contemptible man I must appear to be," he mused thoughtfully, "when even a cock can thus run me down."

He resolved to give his wife the thrashing she rightly deserved.

Life was now astir on his farm. The sun was already shedding its bright rays upon his fruitful fields. The sight restored him to his wonted frame of mind. He walked into the house with light steps. When his wife eventually put before him all sorts of delicacies, the best of rice and curry, and so on, he appeared needlessly cantankerous and perverse in his language towards her. The poor woman little divined that her husband had now become a dominant master of the house. Dutifully she dished out the delicacies to him in the comforting hope that soon she would be told the much-longed-for secret.

Dampo on his part, silently consumed the luscious food. When he had finished the delightful repast, he lounged lazily on a cushion leisurely chewing some fragrantly spiced betel pan.

Then, with the air of a lordly monarch, he reached for his hubble-bubble, and languidly watched through the skeins of smoke his busy wife clearing away the remains of the feast. Inwardly he laughed quietly to himself.

Presently his wife sat down beside him, chewed some spiced betel pan and boldly demanded that the secret be told her. Dampo quizzically smiled and sternly warned her to be silent, clearly intimating that it was not her business to meddle with his secrets. His idea was to convince her by degrees how completely changed he now was in his attitude towards her.

The duped wife, thereupon, began one of her accustomed tantrums, reproaching him bitterly; and accusing him of breach of promise. To drive home his warning, Dampo suddenly stood up, caught hold of his wife's tressess, and thrashed her thoroughly until her aggressive spirit was fully curbed. With pain and mortification at her disgrace, Dampo's subdued spouse solemnly promised not to ask him any more questions regarding his secret.

In course of the time both the wife and husband became perfectly reconciled. They lived happily for many more years in unbroken prosperity and undisturbed peace.

—*Told by Suban Marak Azim at Village Chandrakuna,
P. S. Haluaghat, District Mymensing, East Bengal.*

SAORA SPORA AND THE MERMAID QUEEN

In ancient days when the Achiks were settling in Asong Kamekhya Chiga Chironggi,¹ there lived among them a man named Saora Spora. One day as he strolled about in the jungle, he came upon a beautiful Mermaid Queen who was plucking and eating the *namikron* fruit² on the banks of the Songdu River. Here the noted river was banked with tall massive boulders in those days.

Soara Spora boldly advanced to the beautiful mermaid and seized her by the wrist. She fought shy of him and tried to conceal her face with her hands and hair, though, in truth, she was not in the least afraid of the newcomer. In her struggle she managed to keep her long flowing tresses from becoming tangled in the branches of the nearby trees. Saora fell in love with the bewitching creature who reciprocated his love.

The Mermaid Queen took Saora Spora to her deep watery cavern under the massive rocks on the banks of the river. In her company, the man could walk under water just as if he were on dry land. Not a drop of water entered his nostrils, ears or mouth. His body was not wet and he did not feel the slightest cold. The mermaid bestowed on him the power of feeling perfectly at ease beneath the water.

When the happy pair reached the underwater caverns, the man was given a big, live turtle to sit on. All the caverns were decorated with precious stones. The myriad piebald fishes flitting here and there regarded the newcomer with indifference. They did not fear him at all.

The Mermaid Queen now gave directions to all her servants that preparations should be made for an elaborate marriage festival. She proclaimed that she and her consort would be wedded with due form and ceremony.

Saora Spora enjoyed to the full all the wonders and activities which he witnessed in this underwater domain. He was regarded as lord and master by all the water animals there, such as, alligators, crocodiles, and the big slimy water-serpents, known as *sangkries*,³ turtles and fishes. As servants of the Mermaid Queen, they were at his beck and call.

The marriage ceremony was ultimately celebrated with pomp and pageantry. The grand festival lasted for full forty days and forty nights. Throughout the whole proceedings it rained incessantly on the terrestrial surface. The rain was accompanied by hail and storm. At times lightning dazzled the world and thunder roared over the whole surface of the earth. The winds howled mightily and the rivers, streams and brooks became turbulent, overflowing their banks in their great wrath. Up and down the surging rivers Saora Spora and his Mermaid Queen rode in bridal procession in a bejewelled phaeton drawn by huge aquatic snakes. They were attended by a retinue of mermaids, water-wights and countless water animals. Siren music pervaded the air and water throughout the procession in romantic cadence. The whole under-water world of that particular area was in a marvellous mood.

Saora Spora and his Mermaid Queen mutually cemented a matrimonial contract by which the human race and members of the aquatic beings, mermaids and mermans, could be wedded at will in future. Although he retained all his human characteristics, Saora Spora could now live under water as a perfect denizen of the deep. Love for the beautiful Queen of the deep transformed his former feelings and appetites. He was gradually assimilated into the environment of the deep, and felt perfectly at home there.

However, one day Saora Spora begged his beloved wife to accompany him on a visit to his maternal relations. Readily his spouse consented. Now, when the man had failed long ago to return from the jungle, his relations believed that he had been drowned in one of the rivers. Accordingly, they performed all the funeral rites over his clothes⁴ and articles of use which served as substitute of his body. By the time the newly wedded couple decided to visit the village, the post-funeral ritual performances, known as *Umang so'a* or *Chugana*⁵ (which are still in vogue among the Dual Mathis, Gara-Ganchings and Atongs of the Achiks) were about to take place. Elaborate preparations had been made for their performance.

When the villagers spied Saora Spora and the Mermaid Queen approaching, they were filled with wonder. However, they all turned out to welcome the coming couple. Saora Spora then introduced his wife to all his relations, and requested them to

accord her the best welcome. But the best of food and drink used by human beings was like gall to the Mermaid Queen. She relished nothing of the foodstuff they set before her. The noisy revellings of the villagers contributed very little to soothe her longing for her underwater domain.

Soara Spora's maternal relations were extremely glad to see him again. Several days and nights were given over to festivity at his village, drinking and merry-making in honour of his unexpected return. The best of wine, meat and food flowed in abundance and was partaken of by all present. The preparations meant for the post-funeral ceremonies were converted into gay, joyful festivities. The house meant for mourning became the abode of much revelry. Saora Spora ate and drank to his heart's content.

Meanwhile the Mermaid Queen sat through it all fasting and waiting patiently for her husband to conclude his visit. Saora Spora, immersed as he was in untold convivial delights, had no idea that his wife was literally starving out of disgust for human food and drink. At last the Mermaid Queen entreated her husband to return to her home with her. He ignored her request and continued his eating and drinking. The most he did was to ask her to wait a bit longer. His maternal relations, in exuberant joy at seeing him back, persuaded him to prolong his stay, and implored the Mermaid Queen to the same effect. For her beloved husband's sake, she graciously consented, living on dew and air in the meantime.

Saora Spora was lost in drink revelry. He talked loud and long with his relations. He at times sang carousing songs at the top of his voice out of sheer drunkenness. Again and again his wife requested him to return to her underwater abode. He could hazily understand her request but begged her to stay on a little longer. An empty-headed, full-stomached person seldom rightly imagines the pangs of hunger and thirst of another man. However, the patient Mermaid remained fasting without demur for full seven days and seven nights.

At length, unable any longer to put up with the torture her husband was inflicting on her in detaining her indefinitely, the Mermaid Queen finally departed silently to her watery mansion alone. Her heart was full of disappointment. Shortly after, Saora

Spora sought for his wife ; but in vain. He decided to pursue her later on, when his mind was a bit clearer.

When the stupefying effects of the wine had passed, Saora Spora went to look for his wife. Eventually he came to the edge of a deep pool under which, he thought, was his wife's cavernous home. He dived into the water and tried frantically to reach the bottom ; but to his dismay he was obliged to return to the surface for breath. Again and again he tried, and again he had to return above for his lungs seemed as if they would burst. Repeatedly he tried to reach the underwater world and repeatedly he failed. He had lost the power of remaining under water indefinitely. Now he realised that his energy was merely being dissipated in fruitless attempts. For, he was convinced that, as a simple human being devoid of any supernatural help, he was powerless in trying to remain under water for any length of time on the shore, upbraiding himself for his repugnant behaviour towards his wife. Finally, in great disappointment, he decided to return to his native village.

As Saora Spora sat dejectedly on a rock by the edge of the pool, his wife saw him and ordered her biggest alligator and longest and largest electric eel to fetch his spirit to her. These two creatures were her servants. They obeyed promptly. The alligator caught hold of Saora Spora by the leg and dragged him into the water, where the electric eel coiled about him and lashed him unmercifully. In a few moments Saora Spora was dead. His corpse lay floating on the surface of the pool ; but his spirit, known as *jachri*, was brought by the alligator and the eel to the Mermaid Queen.

The Achiks say that whenever mermaids desire a man or woman, they despatch his or her spirit to their underwater world and leave his or her body afloat as food for alligators, eels and other aquatic animals. Hence, when anyone is drowned, the Achiks are accustomed to say that he or she "has been taken away by a mermaid."

—Told by Shanon Shangma Tegitdi
at Dingrang-Bawegiri,
District Garo Hills.

THE TWO DOVES AND THE TWO BROTHERS

Among the Achiks in Achik Asong there lived in the olden days a very wealthy man at a village, the site of which was somewhere on the bank of the Singwil stream by the north-west of Ranggira Hill.¹ This man dwelt there with his wife, mother-in-law and four daughters. His eldest girl was named Awil; the second eldest, Singwil; and the two younger ones, Nose and Dimse. The first two girls were both beautiful and accomplished. The younger ones were infants.

Now, the man's mother-in-law was a cruel old woman who had little love for her two grand-daughters. She hated Awil and Singwil especially because of their beauty; for she herself was as ugly as any old hag could be. So, she used to get the two girls into difficulty whenever she could. For example, she used to secretly mix husk and charcoal with the rice which Awil and Singwil husked. Again, she would put hair or rat dung into the rice which they had cooked, or sand into the water which they had drawn for drinking. In this way she managed to get her grand-daughters punished by their parents on many occasions.

One day the mother of Awil and Singwil took down some paddy from the granary and told the girls to thresh it with their feet, dry it in the sun and pound it. She also ordered them to fetch water from the river and to cook rice for the family's evening meal. Then she and her husband went to work in their jhum fields.

Awil and Singwil diligently threshed the paddy with their feet and later spread it out in the open courtyard to dry. The day was quite hot; so the two younger girls, Nose and Dimse, cried to be taken down to the river for a bath, Awil and Singwil requested their aged grandmother to look after the paddy while they were gone. There was a fine stretch of sandy beach at the river side and many fish in the river itself. So Nose and Dimse cried to be permitted to play in the sand at making human figures and to catch fish in the river. Their elder sisters agreed to their requests and even joined in their play.

In the meantime the cruel old woman concealed the paddy

which was spread out in the courtyard to dry. When Awil and Singwil returned with their baby sisters, they asked concernedly :

"Grandma, where is the paddy which we left with you?"

She replied. "The paddy was eaten up by a pig with white sides, and a capon."

The girls were afraid that their mother would punish them ; so they took down some more paddy from the granary and began to pound it raw. While they were engaged in this hurried task, their parents returned from the fields. The mother asked :

"What, haven't you finished pounding the paddy yet?"

Then the cruel grand-mother spoke up and said that the negligent girls had allowed a pig and capon to eat up the paddy which was given ; and that the two mischievous sisters took down more paddy from the granary in order to deceive their mother. At this the angry mother beat the girls so unmercifully that they both fainted.

On another day after the father had gone to a market, the old woman falsely accused Awil and Singwil of further wrongdoing. Again their mother beat them very severely and afterwards confined them in a pig-sty for the rest of the night. The next morning she went to the jhum fields without freeing her daughters or giving them food and drink. A little later some children came near the pig-sty to play *gila* seeds. During the game a *gila* seed accidentally rolled into the pig-sty. When one of the youngsters came to fetch it, Awil said to him :

If you will open the door of the pig-sty, I will give you your *gila* seed."

The boy readily agreed. So the two sisters were set free. Then Awil said : "Sister, go to the fowl-house and collect some feather. While you are gone, I will cook rice for both of us."

Singwil went and collected the feathers, while Awil cooked rice, killed her father's pet capon and stewed it with some vegetable for curry. She carefully preserved the feathers. When the abused sisters finished their meal, Awil said to Singwil :

"Why should we continue to remain here where we receive nothing but beatings and abuses. Let us stick these feathers to our bodies with wax, turn ourselves into doves and fly away from this wretched place."

Singwil agreed. So they stuck the feathers to their bodies with wax, with the help of *dohkongsi*, a water magpie, turned

themselves into doves through occult means and by sheer force of their extraordinary will power and flew from roof to roof. At length they flew to the jhum field where their mother was working, perched themselves on a tree and cooed :

“Gukuru—gitu—guk—gu—gu—gu²
 With a piece of thorny firewood,
 Were we beaten by you, Mother ;
 Guk—guk. . . guk, Awil and Singwil, we
 Sisters two, guk—guk—guk,
 Nose, Dimse, younger ones.
 Gu—gu—gu we had not
 Cooked rice with husk and
 Rat dung for you, Mother ;
 Guk—guk—guk we had not drawn
 Water with sand for father.
 Guk—guk—guk, for nothing we
 Were made to wander, Guk—guk
 Guturu, gitu—guk—guk—guk.”

When the mother heard this strain, she was very much frightened ; for she had never heard any bird sing with human voice like these two. So she hastened back to look for her daughters in the pig-sty, but could not find them anywhere.

The father of the two girls was just returning from the market. As he approached his village proper, the two doves perched on a banyan tree and together cooed :

“Gukuru—gitu—guk—guk—guk
 Father has gone to the market
 He brings some capon white gu—gu—gu
 A white-backed pig, he brings.
 Guk—guk. . . guk Awil and Singwil
 Are sisters two, guk—gu—gu
 Nose, Dimse, younger ones.
 Guk—guk. . . guk, black-striped cloth
 Father wears, guk. . . guk—guk ;
 Leading a small bull comes he.
 Guturu, gitu—guk—guk—guk.”

The father heard their voices and was much troubled in mind. He hurried home and found his wife and two younger daughters weeping for the missing Awil and Singwil. He, too,

began to weep. In the midst of their tears the two doves flew towards the house and perched on the roof. The mother took out all her valuables and spread them on the open courtyard. She said to the doves :

"Take all these valuable necklaces and cloth. Leave your dove-shapes and become human beings once more. You have been frequently beaten on account of your grandmother's wickedness. That is all ended now. We have found her out. You will be beaten no more. Come to your home again, my dear children."

The tears and entreaties of the parents were in vain. The doves would not return to their former shapes. Instead they said :

"If you really love us, hang up two necklaces on a bamboo pole."

The parents did so immediately. Then the two doves swooped down, picked them up and flew away.

A few days after these events two brothers, named Anal and Gunal, were clearing jungle in their jhum fields. The two doves perched on a tree close to them and cooed :

"Gukuru, gitu—guk. . . guk. . . guk
We, Awil, Singwil, sisters two.
Guk—guk—guk. You, Anal, Gunal
Brothers two, Guk—guk—guk—"

Gunal, the younger brother, heard this clearly, and said to Anal : "Listen, brother, the two doves are singing like human beings."

The elder brother did not believe this. He got angry with Gunal and beat him with the handle of his *dao*. After a little while the two doves cooed again in the same strain ; and this time Anal did hear it. He begged his brother's pardon and was forgiven.

Anal and Gunal set traps to catch the two doves. Awil was caught in the trap of the elder brother, while Singwil was caught in the trap of the younger brother. Anal killed his dove, cooked it and ate it up. Gunal, however, took his dove and put it in a cage. He took good care of it, giving it rice and water every morning before going out into the fields to work. One day, shortly after he and his brother left the house, the dove flew out of the cage and turned herself into a beautiful girl. She cleaned

the house, swept the floor, drew water, cooked rice and then returned to her former shape and entered the cage.

When Anal and Gunal got back from work, they were surprised to find the house in such good order and their evening meal waiting for them. They were at a loss to explain the phenomena. But they were too tired to discuss the matter. So they ate the rice and went to sleep. The next day the dove did the household chores as before. When the brothers discovered everything in readiness a second time, they grew afraid. They feared that it was the work of a ghost or spirit.

Anal decided to find out the cause of the strange happenings. Accordingly, he rolled himself up in a mat, stuffed the top with cloth, bored two holes for his eyes, and waited to see what would occur. But after a short while he fell asleep. As he slept the dove came out of the cage, transformed herself into a charming young girl and performed the customary household tasks.

On the following morning Gunal decided that he would try to solve the mystery. He, too, rolled himself up in the mat ; but he took the additional precaution of cutting his finger and rubbing it with salt in order to keep awake. He pretended that he was fast asleep. The dove, flew out of the cage, transformed herself, lighted up fire, cooked rice and drew water. While she was sweeping the floor, Gunal swiftly leaped out of his hiding place, seized her by the wrist, and asked her name. The pretty girl struggled to free herself and said :

"My name is Singwill. Set me free. If you don't let me go, it will not be well with you."

Gunal would not listen to her entreaty. Instead he ardently asked her to marry him. The girl answered :

"If you wish, I will marry. However, you must not reproach me, if harm should come to you after our marriage."

Gunal replied lovingly, "I will never reproach you, darling. Let us henceforward live together as husband and wife. I earnestly entreat you never again to turn into a dove."

The girl agreed and they were consequently married.

Now Singwil was exquisitely beautiful. So Anal grew very jealous of his brother and wanted to kill him so that he could marry the girl himself. Therefore, one day he asked Gunal to come with him to catch fish and crabs. Gunal's faithful dog, Irija Ganggaja, followed them. During their labours Anal went a little further up

the stream and dug a hole in the sand wide enough for a man to lie in. He then called Gunal and said to him :

"Brother, here are some crabs and *nahchi* fish (*Ophiocephalus barca*). I am tired. Come and dig a bit more so that we can catch them."

Gunal did as he was told. While he was in the hole. Anal leaped up, burying big stones into the opening and covered his brother with them. Then he returned home. There Singwil asked him about her husband. He said :

"I tried to bring Gunal back ; but he said that he wished to go away. He asked me to tell you not to worry about him ; but that you may take another husband, if you wish." By this time Iriji Ganggaja, Gunal's dog who had witnessed the murderous act, came wailing to Singwil and told her all that had occurred. She said to the faithful animal :

"Come, Irija Ganggaja, let us search for thy lord and master."

Then taking an iron rod, a mat, a fan and bunch of cock tail feathers, Singwil followed the dog to the spot where her husband was buried. Tenderly she took out the body, washed it lovingly, and fanned it slowly as she prayed to the Supreme Mithdei (Deity), Tattara Rabuga, Stura Pantura, Dakgipa Rugipa, Suulgipa Imboggipa, Janggini Nokgipa, Jamani Biambi,³ saying :

"O Tattara Rabuga, thou father of life, thou owner of breath, blow life into my beloved husband ; give breath to my loved one ; make him speak, sit and stand."

She struck the mat several times with the iron rod and Gunal returned to life. Together they went home in great joy.

Some months later Anal took Gunal with him into the forest to search for birds' nests. Gunal's faithful dog again accompanied them. They came to a huge *simul* tree (*Bombax malabaricum*) whose girth was thirty cubits. Anal told his brother that there was a bird's nest on the top of the tree and asked him to climb up and get it. Gunal obeyed. When he was on the top, Anal prayed to Tattara Rabuga, saying :

"O Tattara Rabuga, that his life may end and his breath be cut off, raise the tree to the skies."

All of a sudden the tree sprang up until it touched the sky. It was Anal's hope that his brother would fall from the top and be killed or die there from starvation. But Gunal's faithful dog,

Irija Ganggaja, rushed back to his mistress and informed her of the misfortune which had befallen his master. Singwil followed the dog to the foot of the simul tree. The distraught wife could find no way of bringing her husband down to earth. For full seven days and seven nights she stayed at the spot sobbing bitterly at Gunal's plight and her own helplessness. She prayed to the birds of the air, saying :

"O ye strong-winged birds, soar high and bring back my husband to me. Ye eagles, ye vultures, ye kites, don't you see that the good man who loves you so much is stranded on the top of this tree? Bring him down; bring down my beloved to me."

But the birds would not listen to her prayer. Finally, Rema Gongga Toajeng Abiljeng, the patriarchal head of the golden-backed woodpeckers, asked her :

"What will you give me if I bring Gunal down to you?"

Singwil answered quickly : "I will give you gongs, money, clothes, whatever I prize most. I will give even my own life, if you will bring him down to earth."

Rema Gongga answered : "I know that you are sorely afflicted because of your husband's plight. Therefore, I will not ask precious things of you. All I want is an axe and a pugree. Do that and I will bring Gunal down."

Singwil went and fetched the two simple gifts which the woodpecker asked. The bird then soared into the skies and brought Gunal down on its strong back. Singwil took her husband home and nursed him back to health. As for Rema Gongga, he put his red pugree on his head and forever carried about the axē which became a formidable weapon on his heads. His descendants are now known as the golden-backed, red top woodpeckers.

At a later date Anal took Gunal again into the forest to secure some charcoal. Gunal's dog followed them as usual. The brothers dug a hole as deep as a man's height in the forest and filled it up with dried wood. On this they erected another pile of a man's height, and set fire to it all. When the flames were blazing high, Anal told Gunal to tend the fire. As he did so, Anal pushed him into the roaring fire, heaped logs of dried wood on him and went home. Gunal's dog rushed back to his mistress and told her of the fate of her husband. Singwil took an iron rod,

a mat and a fan as before, went to the fire, pulled her husband out of the flames, and again besought Tattara Rabuga to restore him to life. Her prayer was heard a second time and Gunal was brought back to life once more.

Now Gunal was at the end of his tether. He said :

I have patiently borne with Anal's misconduct three times. I cannot endure any more. Someday he may really kill me in cold blood."

So he decided to put an end to his brother's mischief-making. He killed some pigs and fowls at his house, brought out much *chu* (rice-beer), beat 'tom-toms,'⁴ and made all the preparations required for a grand feast. Then he invited Anal to come to his house to drink and dine. But Anal refused to come ; for he now feared Gunal very much. Again and again Gunal sent him an invitation ; and as often Anal pretended that he was ill and could not come. Finally, the younger brother snatched up a long gourd ladle full of chubitchi (liquid extract of rice-beer), went to Anal and forced it down his throat. In a few moments the wicked elder brother was dead.

After that Gunal and Singwil lived happily. They were blessed with many good and beautiful sons and daughters who, in the course of time, became brave warriors and mighty personages renowned in the history of the Achik tribe. And a clear stream, flowing on the north-west of the Ranggira Hill in Achik Asong, remains named after Singwil up to this day.

—Told by Srimati Dingjang Shangma Rongmuthu
at Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.

THE MAGIC SILK CLOTH

Among the Achiks in Achik Asong in ages past, there was a very rich man who had a very beautiful daughter, his only child. This girl, according to the matrilineal system prevalent among the tribe, he chose to be the direct heir of his house. In the course of time, she was married to her handsome cousin, on her father's side.

Among other legacies, the rich man bequeathed to the newly wedded couple a mysteriously woven and wonderfully decorated magic silk cloth which had been given first by a goddess to the great, great grandmother of the man's wife. It was now kept in the house as a particularly precious heirloom. Attached to the magic silk cloth was a special *Mantra* or incantation which had to be uttered over it before any one lay hands on it. Otherwise, the toucher would at once be changed into a bird, the cloth itself becoming the tails, wings and feathers. The daughter had been taught the *Mantra* by her parents and she knew it well. Therefore, by uttering the sacred *Mantra* before touching it, she could safely handle the precious heirloom at will. Her husband, however, was absolutely ignorant of the secret cloth and the *Mantra* connected with it. He noticed the heirloom often, but thought it to be of ordinary make.

In the course of time both the rich man and his wife died ; so the daughter and her husband became the sole heirs of the house. One day the woman took out the richly decorated magic cloth to sun it. She left the cloth spread out in an open courtyard with strict injunctions to her husband that, even though rain should fall in torrents and hail should descend like scattered grapes from above, he should under no circumstances handle the precious cloth. She herself then departed to a nearby stream to fish for prawns, taking with her the *chekke*, triangular fishing basket and a *koksi*, fish-creel.

Before long the sky darkened and great masses of threatening black clouds made their appearance. Soon it began to rain. Feeling greatly concerned about the silk cloth, the husband cried at the top of his voice for his wife, who, hearing his shout, came running post-haste. Just a moment before her arrival, forgetting

her injunctions and seeing the rain already descending heavily accompanied by pelting hail, the anxious husband rushed out and seized the cloth to take it home. At his touch he was instantly transformed into a large, beautiful, gallinaceous male bird with plumage of brilliant colours. In an instant his wife darted up, and, at the identical moment her husband handled the magic silk cloth, she, too, without uttering the obligatory incantation, touched the cloth, exclaiming sorrowfully : "Alas, we are already lost." Suddenly, she also was changed into a large, beautiful gallinaceous female bird with plumage of the same colour, but less brilliance.

These two birds remained as the peacock and peahen. The peacock wears more brilliant colours in his plumage than the peahen because he has had the greater portion of the magic silk cloth changed into his tail, wings and feathers.

Ever since that eventful day, when the storm-clouds gather and thunder rumbles along with the winds, peacocks still cry out with anxiety in fear that their garments of beautifully brilliant colours may be spoiled by the coming rain.

—Told by Tillokchon Shangma Rongrokgre
at Aruakgiri, District Garo Hills.

THE STAIRCASE TO THE MOON

Among the Achiks in Achik Asong, there once lived in very ancient days a man named Jarang. He had a beautiful wife and a fine-looking son still in his early teens. Jarang loved his wife and child more than anything else in the world and tried his level best to please them in every way.

One day at eventide as he was sitting with his beloved wife and child in the open courtyard of his house, they saw the moon appear in all its glory high up in the clear, serene sky. The child especially watched it thoughtfully for a long time and finally cried out to his father :

"Oh, that beautiful moon ! How I wish I could grasp it in my hands and play with it. Father, please fetch it for me to play with."

The father kindly remonstrated with the child, saying that the moon was very far away and there was no solid road for him to travel to get it. But the spoilt child would not be appeased by these gentle words. He cried incessantly and insisted on having the moon. He refused food and drink. Consequently, he grew pale and haggard-looking. Jarang's wife, unable to endure the distressing tantrums of the child any longer, scolded her husband, saying :

"Do you wish the doleful cries of the child should continue till he dies ? Surely, had you tried, you could have fetched the moon for him. Why not construct a staircase to the moon and drag it here within our reach once and for all."

In her foolish mind she pooh-poohed the idea that it was an impossible task. So, the husband unable to bear any longer the constant nagging of his wife and the persistent crying of his child, decided to build a staircase to the moon. He assured his son that he was going to fetch the moon for him.

Jarang set about gathering together enormous quantities of wooden posts and bamboos wherewith to raise the intended structure, and piled up the needful material in one place. With the help of his nephew, he laid the foundation for the immense staircase. The job of fetching the wooden posts and bamboos

from the huge pile was assigned to the nephew, while Jarang himself was occupied in erecting one staircase upon another.

When the staircase ascended far above the clouds, Jarang really believed that he was now certainly nearing the moon. He shouted from above to his nephew below :

"Bring up bamboos. Bring up bamboos."

His wife and nephew on the ground far below could not catch his words distinctly. To them it sounded as if he was shouting exultantly :

"I've got the moon. I've got the moon. Hew down the staircase."

Again and again they listened attentively and the same message seemed to be wafted down. Immediately the obedient nephew took up an axe and hewed down the main pillars of the enormous structure. Soon it fell with a tremendous crash, propelling Jarang through space to a distant place where he was killed instantaneously. Not finding his fallen body, his wife and nephew waited expectantly for many days for him to return bearing triumphantly in his hands the cherished moon. But there was no further sign of the returning conqueror. After many more days of weary waiting, Jarang's wife and nephew angrily concluded that he had furtively fled to the abode of the moon and stars.

The fallen heap of the staircase afterwards became a small range of hills which eventually came to be known as *Jajong Kadoram*. This small hill range can still be seen in Achik Asong up to this day.

—Told by Monjiram Shangma Koksi
at Village Gumuria, District Kamrup

THE FIVE BROTHERS-IN-LAW

Among the Achiks in a village in the hills of Achik Asong, there once lived in ancient times a man named Erong. He had five married daughters whose husbands were respectively named, Rakran, Sikran, Charang and Warang. They all lived together in the village, cultivating the slopes of the hills.

One day the five brothers-in-law, carrying with them baskets of dried chillies for sale, set out for the market which was three days' journey from the village. Although the quintet were shrewd and far-seeing in matters of *jhum* or shifting cultivation, once they were out of their accustomed milieu, they proved themselves such simpletons as to be unable to make profitable bargains out of their basketfuls of dried chillies with the foreign purchasers in the market. They sold their produce at very low rates, far below the prevailing prices at the time. With his scanty sale proceeds each of them bought a duck, a packet of salt, a bundle of dried fish, and started for home.

While they were returning to their native village, rain fell heavily and continuously for a full day and a full night. On the way they had to cross a stream which was in high spate due to the recent downpour. They were in a dilemma as to how to get safely to the other side. Presently one of them suggested that they should send their ducks ahead of them to see whether or not they could cross the swollen stream. The brothers-in-law promptly concurred to this brilliant plan. They put the ducks in the water and watched them swim to the opposite shore with ease. The brothers-in-law had never before seen or heard of the habits of ducks in water. In fact, this was the first time they had ever purchased the web-footed, short-legged water fowls. Warang, therefore, at the sight cried out blissfully :

"See, the ducks have easily waded across the stream. Surely, the water must be extremely shallow in that it did not even cover the ducks. We can safely ford it, too. Come along!"

With these words Warang promptly stepped into the rushing, muddy water of the stream. Rakran, Sikran and Charang simultaneously did likewise with their baskets on their backs. The current of the surging stream was fast and treacherous; so the five foolish brothers-in-law were at once swept off their feet and drowned.

—Told by Tokang Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Chasatgiri, District Garo Hills.

BORAPA

Among the Achiks in Achik Asong in very ancient days there lived a rich cultivator, named Borapa. When the paddy stalks began to ear, he was accustomed to sleep alone in his *Bo'rang* (tree-top house) every night to keep watch over his *jhum* field. Before retiring to bed, he was wont to shout out :

"I am Borapa. I am brave. Who dares come here? Come, if you are a brave being, you coward, you scoundrel."

One night he fell fast asleep after having shouted out his haughty words of challenge to the whole world. A little while later, a hideous-looking ogre came to his *Bo'rang* to ascertain for himself what kind of a being Borapa really was. He shook the *Bo'rang* vigorously, awakening Borapa instantly. The sight of the terrible-looking ogre frightened the man so much that he was paralyzed with fear and could neither move nor cry out. He simply sat and stared incredibly at the horrible spectacle.

The ogre peered into the *Bo'rang* and saw a sharp spear which suddenly attracted his attention. He picked it up and examined it, wondering meanwhile what the strange instrument really was and tried to find out for what purpose it was used. During his manipulations, he tentatively put the sharp point of the spear over his heart as if to stab himself, wondering if it was used for this purpose.

Borapa, who had been silently watching the ogre play with the spear, now fully regained his presence of mind and shouted out at the top of his voice. The unexpected yell so frightened the ogre that he drove the point of the spear into his own heart. He jumped down from the *Bo'rang*, fled into the forest, and soon died from his self-inflicted wound. Borapa, too, leaped from the *Bo'rang* and ran home with full speed.

About midnight some friends of the dead ogre came to the place to avenge the demise of their friend. They tore the whole house asunder in their search for Borapa, and, when they could not find him anywhere, they broke to pieces what remained of the *Bo'rang* and went away.

—Told by Sukan Shangma Rongrokgre
at Malapara, District Kamrup.

THE TWO BROTHERS-IN-LAW

Once upon a time in a village in Achik Asong there lived two brothers-in-law, named Jangga and Rangga. The first married the eldest daughter and the second married the second-eldest daughter of a man named Changga.

One day, carrying with them basketfuls of dried red chillies the two brothers-in-law started out for a distant village, which was two days' journey from their native village. On the first day's travel they were overtaken by night and so encamped by the side of a clear sparkling stream. They lighted a fire, prepared their rice and curry and ate it heartily on the sandy stream. As it grew darker, Rangga said :

"Let us gather some dry logs and make a large fire to keep us warm during the night."

Jangga replied : "The sun has been shining all day long and the sand itself is quite warm. Why should we bother about logs ? I am going to dig a hole in the warm sand and sleep there for the night, covering myself with warm sand."

Rangga, however, did not think this sound advice. So he gathered together some logs, made a bright fire, and lay beside it in comfort. Jangga merely covered himself and went to sleep. As the night advanced the sand became cool and Jangga shivered from the cold. Finally he fainted in sheer exhaustion. About midnight Rangga called out to his brother-in-law : "Are you sleeping well ?" There was no answer. Again he called, still there was no response. At this Rangga got up and touched Jangga's body. It was icy cold. He then carried the body of his brother-in-law to the fire and thawed it out. Soon Jangga was revived and spent the remainder of the night near the hot fire. In the morning he was well enough to continue the journey.

The brothers-in-law went to the market, sold their wares, and started back to their native village. On their return journey they were obliged to spend the night in the forest. They came to a large *peepul* tree beside a rill and decided to spend the night there. After they had eaten their evening rice and curry, Rangga said :

"Let us prepare our beds here at the foot of this big *peepul* tree."

Jangga replied : "I am not so foolish as to sleep on the ground in this lonely forest. At night tigers roam about. Let us instead sleep on the top of the tree, binding ourselves to the branches with our clothes."

Rangga did not like this idea. He said with finality : "I cannot climb trees well ; so I will sleep here on the ground."

With that Rangga set about to gather some dry logs of wood, made a good fire by the side of the *peepul* tree and lay down to sleep, uttering a prayer of resignation of his mind, soul and body to the safe keeping of Kalkame Kalgra.

Jangga, meanwhile, out of fear of tigers, climbed the tree, tied himself to a main branch by means of his clothes, and went off to sleep. Late at night Rangga felt something dripping on him from above. Then a small heavy piece of something fell with a thud near him. Rangga got up, stirred the fire, and found the ground and his bed-clothes spattered with blood. Pieces of human bones were scattered here and there. Rangga was too frightened to run away. He made water to ease himself, lay down again quietly and held tight to his trusty big *dao*, ready to defend himself against the wild beast above. In a moment he saw clearly what happened. A big tiger had seen Jangga tied to the tree from a distance, had rushed to the spot, scaled the tree and was now making a meal of the unfortunate man. Rangga kept himself wide awake in the bed the rest of the night. He heard the crunching of bones above and witnessed the intermittent shower of blood and cast-off pieces of bone.

In the early hours of the morning, Rangga got up and made his way to his native village with all possible speed. He gasped out the story of his previous night's tragedy to the members of his family and neighbours who gathered around him and listened to his gruesome tale in pin-drop silence.

—Told by *Jonggal Marak Raksam*
at Village *Rongbinggiri*, District *Garo Hills*.

HOW A THIEF WAS PUNISHED

In ancient times in a village among the Achiks there lived a man named Rakda who had a son called Dengja. Now owing to a drought a great famine was raging in their village. So, one day, both the father and son went to a distant place, taking a couple of baskets with them, in order to do manual labour there for something to buy rice. All day the two worked hard under the scorching heat of the sun in the field of a rich man and managed to fill their baskets with paddy in return for their earnest labours. Then they started off for home.

On their way back the father and son took a short rest under the cool shade of a *peepul* tree. Dengja feeling very thirsty went in search of water to drink and asked his father to wait for him. While he was away, Rakda said to himself.

"Oh, how we must suffer for want of rice to eat at home! I wish I had more paddy in my basket. My son is away. There is none to see me. It doesn't matter much if I take some paddy out of his basket and put it in mine.

Accordingly, the father took three helpings with both hands from his son's basket. Then he smoothed the paddy so that no trace of theft was noticeable. When Dengja returned, he was totally ignorant of what his father had done. So he took up his basket and the two began their homeward journey and reached their native village.

Now, some months later Rakda fell seriously ill and soon died. Dengja who was a conscientious and obedient son set about to perform necessary funeral ceremonies. According to tribal custom, he killed a dog, some bulls and fowls, performed in the best manner the funeral rites and finally cremated the body of the deceased on a pyre of dried wood. Afterwards he set up a *Kima* or memorial post in front of his father's house.

In the economy of the Mother-Goddess *Dingipa Bahbra*, nothing is lost, nothing is overlooked or forgotten, but every action, thought and feeling is taken into account and recorded in a way not discernible by mortal eyes. So, in his rebirth Rakda, because of the theft he had committed in the land of the living, was reborn as a cow. The selfsame cow was made to plough his

son's paddy fields. For five years the cow laboured hard and eventually died. Dengja, who had a vegetable garden near his house, put up the fleshless head of the cow to be used as a scarecrow.

Now, one evening a woman from Dengja's village entered his garden to steal some vegetables. Strangely enough the head of the cow began to address her in the following strain :

"Beware, O woman, do not steal. As a man I was Rakda, the father of Dengja. I once stole some paddy from my son's basket during the last famine. For that foul deed *Dingipa Bahbra* made me be reborn as a cow and plough the fields of my son for full five years. As a cow I am now dead ; but the debt incurred through my commission of theft is not yet fully repaid. I am still compelled to watch my son's garden like this."

The woman almost frightened out of her wits, ran off to Dengja and told him all the head of the cow had spoken to her. Dengja was much troubled in mind. He went to his vegetable garden, took the cow's head and burned it up. Next night in a dream he heard his father asking him :

"Have you fully forgiven me, my son ?"

Dengja replied "Assuredly, father, I have."

"Then let me depart in peace," answered Rakda.

After this dream Dengja was much eased in mind and was not troubled any more in the future by the cow's head. He felt sure that the spirit of his father had already passed completely beyond the chains and limitations of the mortal life into the blissful spiritland, there to remain for a time until it is commanded by the higher spirits to be reborn as a human being into this world.

—Told by Suban Marak Azim
at Village Chandrakuna P.S. Haluaghat
District Mymensingh, East Bengal.

THE FIRST SIN OF THE FIRST FALSE SWEARING

In ages long gone by when the Achiks were settling in a country, known as A'song Saora Chiga Timbora, a man, named Asi, committed adultery with the daughter of his mother's younger sister. When people suspected him openly, he publicly pleaded himself not guilty, and according to the age-long Achik custom, swore solemnly, biting the blade of a *Milam* (two-edged sword), to the effect that, if he was guilty, a tiger should kill him outright and devour him.

The next day a tiger killed him on account of his first sin of the first false swearing.

In about the same time, another man, named Malja, of the same country, committed adultery with his own niece. When publicly accused of the guilt, Malja denied the charge, and, solemnly swore a false oath, biting the blade of a *Milam*, pleading that, if he was not really innocent, an elephant should surely destroy him outright. The next day he was instantly killed by a rogue elephant solely on account of his sin of the first false swearing.

Ever since, the names of Asi and Malja became by-words among the Achiks, connoting sin and death due to deliberately sworn lies. The word *Asimalja* generally has become surcharged with unsavoury meanings to the Achiks up to this day with reference to any word, thought and action.

—Told by Alasingh Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

JINTU AND HIS FINGER

One day a man, named Jintu, in Achik Asong, while cutting thatch-grass in a jungle was severely bitten on the tip of one of the fingers of his left hand by a very poisonous snake. With a sudden slash of his *dao*, he instantaneously cut off the stricken finger before the venom could enter his system. Then he returned home while the blood was still oozing from the stump of the severed finger.

The next day the wound was still bleeding. Jintu seeing it thought of his accident, suddenly felt keenly the loss of his finger, and mused on his disfigured left hand.

Jintu resolved to go back to the place where he had cut off his finger on the previous day. Arriving there, Jintu discovered the detached finger lying on the ground whole, but completely stuffed with yellowish-blue liquid -- the deadly venom injected by the snake. Jintu picked up the venom-bloated sundered finger and tentatively fitted it into the still bleeding swollen stump, just to see how his left hand looked with the parted finger replaced. No sooner had he done this than the poison from the severed finger mingled with the blood of the stump and rapidly flowed into his system. In a few moments Jintu was dead.

—Told by Thosan Shangma Simsang
at Village Namiksikgiri, District Garo Hills.

THE TWO YOUNG MEN AND THE AJAJU

In olden days in the deep primitive forests in Achik Asong there used to dwell kneeless carnivorous creatures, known as Ajajus. The legs of these animals were like bamboo stalks without nodes. They had no knee-joints ; but they did possess long sharp forked tongues with which they used to lick up the flesh and blood of their victims. In moving about from place to place these strange creatures were accustomed to swing cleverly from tree to tree. When there were no trees, their movement was greatly retarded. The heads and bodies of these creatures were like those of enormous chameleons. At night they used to sleep reclining against tall trees.

In catching its prey the Ajaju had its difficulties. If the prey ran downhill, it was almost impossible for the creature to catch it. On the contrary, if the quarry ran up hill, its task was quite easy, since the creature possessed twelve long forked sickle-like tongues which it had only to lash out and swallow up its victim. At leisure it could spit out the bones of the victims which it did not like. Whenever the Ajaju heard a human voice, it would shout out in a shrill penetrating tone : "Wa-o, wa-o, wa-o." If the person responded, mistaking it for the voice of a human being, the Ajaju would come nearer and nearer still continuing its strange cry. For this reason, the Achiks formerly were accustomed to shout out in a high-pitched voice whenever they went into a deep forest in order to find out if any Ajaju was lurking about. If there be any, it would immediately respond ; and the Achiks would put the distance between themselves and the carnivorous creatures.

Now, in those ancient days there lived two young men in Achik Asong who were respectively named Ajan and Tojan. One day both of them went into a deep forest on the Dura Hills in search of *sokmyl* (edible cane-fruit). As they penetrated deeper and deeper into the forest, they shouted aloud to frighten off any wild beast which might be in the vicinity. Suddenly they heard a sharp shrill voice stealing across the distant slopes of the hills. Thinking that it was a human voice, they shouted in answer. At this the voice came nearer and nearer, until they beheld its

possessor—an ugly ajaju. Too late they discovered that they had been holding concourse unwittingly with this terrible creature. Their hearts beat wildly in sheer terror.

Instinctively Ajan and Tojan took to their heels. Ajan cried to his companion : “Look, it has no knees. Let us run downhill.”

Tojan returned agitatedly : “No. Let’s run uphill.”

There was no time for argument ; so each ran in opposite directions according to his choice.

As Ajan was nearer the ajaju, he ran downhill as fast as he could. In his frenzy he tripped over a creeper, somersaulted in the air, and fell on the ground perilously near the avaracious creature. He lay stunned and too panic-stricken to move an inch ; but as the ajaju had no knees it was unable to bend its legs and body and so could not get at him, however hard it tried.

The beast promptly turned and made after Tojan running uphill. Within a few moments the animal was near enough to lash out its tongue and swallow up its fleeing quarry in the twinkling of an eye. With horror Ajan watched the savage beast lick up the flesh and blood of his foolhardy companion, spit out his bones distastefully and move on. Ajan got to his feet and fled on towards his village as fast as he could.

*Told by Remon Marak Raksam
at Village Dalbotgiri, District Garo Hills.*

A POOR MAN AND A COUPLE OF ELVES

The Achiks say that there are diminutive man-like creatures, called *Tengtes* or *Totengs*, who live in caves in certain deep primitive forests in Achik Asong. The plains people call these creatures *Joukinis*. The *Tengtes* possess supernatural powers in some things, but they can be controlled by human beings by means of special *Mantras* (incantations) and certain herbs of high potency. Another instance of their limitation is that, although they are able to easily move or lift heavy things or stones of immense size, they are utterly incapable of lifting a *cochoo* leaf (*colocasia indica*). And, sometimes, they are also killed and eaten by tigers.

One day a couple of such elves left their baby on a flat rock in the channel of a hill stream. By and by, a very poor man in tattered rags came across the baby-elf while he was in search of some edible wild roots or tubers for food. Knowing the weakness of the elves, the man promptly plucked a leaf of *cochoo*, covered the baby with it, hid himself in a nearby jungle, and watched to see what would happen. Presently the parents of the baby-elf returned to the stream, saw the plight of their child, and tried their utmost to rescue it from the *cochoo* leaf. They utilized adders, khraties, asps and earthworms as fulcrums in their attempt to hoist the leaf; but with no avail. The *cochoo* leaf was too heavy for them; and no matter how hard they tried, they could not budge it an inch.

Thereupon, the poor man came out of his place of concealment and proffered his help on condition that the elves should bless him with every good thing in the world. The small creatures, seeing how their own repeated attempts were futile, immediately promised the man to give him all the earthly wealth he demanded. So, the man walked away a little distance, broke a branch of the *Bolpu* tree (*Albizzia stipulata*) and returned. Once again he reiterated his demands that the elves should bestow on him as much money, rice, valuable gongs, and cloth as there were leaves on the branch which he had brought. The elves readily consented.

The poor man then took up the *cochoo* leaf with ease and restored their beloved child to the anxious parents. The elves kept their promise to the man and blessed him with vast material goods and comforts. The man was now exceedingly rich.

—Told by Shri Shanon Shangma Tegitdi
at Village Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.

THE TWO SISTERS AND THE OGRE

Once upon a time in olden days there lived in Achik Asong two sisters named Anok and Ronje. One day they both went down to a stream to catch prawns and small fish, taking with them their *chekkes* (triangular fishing baskets) and *koksis* (fish-creels). With these instruments they managed to catch a good deal of prawns; and, at one place, they entrapped a tiny limpet. Farther on they caught a larger limpet. Still further on, they caught a much larger limpet. As a matter of fact, the farther they advanced down the stream, the larger did each limpet they caught become.

At length the sisters came to a pool where they saw a giant limpet which was as huge as the biggest *rongtek* (a kind of big basket used for storing paddy, millet or maize). The giant limpet ran after Anok and Ronje and they fled for their lives. Finally, they climbed up a wild creeper and escaped. A big bull-elephant came along; the giant limpet saw it and gave it chase. The elephant ran up to the edge of a high precipice where both he and the limpet struggled furiously and eventually fell headlong into a yawning abyss and were lost.

Anok and Ronje then wandered far deep into the forest and met a superb royal tiger who said to them:

"If you are unable to find your way back home, go to the house of Ginggrek Mikdalong Gingthongreng. He will show you the way out of the forest. He will kill fowls, castrated pigs and and cows and will cook them for you to eat. But, beware. He is a cruel ogre."

The two sisters at length came to the house of Ginggrek. The ogre had a large long nose, hard as an elephant's tusk, with which he used to pierce his victims and kill them. He welcomed the girls warmly, invited them to dine, and served them an elaborate meal with excellent wine. At night he conducted them to a bedroom, showed them a couple of delightful beds, gave them six warm blankets each with which to cover themselves, and then went away.

Anok was soon sound asleep; but Ronje who felt something eerie about the place, could not shut her eyes. About midnight,

the ogre entered the room. Ronje saw him coming and was afraid to stay in the house any longer. She tried to awaken her sister who was sleeping soundly; but in vain. So Ronje put a log of wood in her place under the blankets and ran out of the house. The ogre came on and speared Anok with his hard sharp nose and killed her outright. He then speared the place where Ronje was supposedly sleeping and broke his nose on the hard log of wood. At this he became exceedingly furious and gave a wild chase to the escaped girl.

Ronje ran on and on and in the morning arrived at the house of Mesema Mesenchi Soksonchi, the matriarchal head of the rodents. Mesema took her into her house and concealed her in a safe place. Presently the ogre, with a bleeding nose, himself arrived at the house and asked if a young girl had fled that way. Mesema told him that she had not noticed anyone running in that direction that morning. The next day, Mesema took the much frightened girl to her own village. As a reward for her kindness Ronje gave Mesema six basketfuls of rice and six basketfuls of millet. Ever since that day the rats and squirrels have become very fond of rice and millet.

—Told by Wajan Marak Raksam,
at Dalbotgiri, District Garo Hills.

AWAT AND THE MATCHADUS

In the midst of an impenetrable primitive forest on the banks of the upper stages of the Simsang River in Achik Asong, there was once in very ancient days a little colony of Matchadus, a race of black mop-headed cannibals, who were half-men and half-tigers. Among them there were only thirty members all of whom had wives and children. These apparently human creatures could turn themselves completely into tigers at will. By then, the Matchadus generally assumed the shapes of men and dressed themselves in clothing like human beings. By this means they used to decoy men and women and devour them.

About a day's journey on foot from this colony of Matchadus, there was a large Achik village, where an Achik youth, named Awat, lived. Now and then the Matchadus used to come from their colony to the Achik village for the purpose of bartering articles of value. Whenever any of them was discovered to be a Matchadu, the Achiks used to cut off his head with their sharp *Milams* (two-edged swords). For these Matchadus were cruel, treacherous and inexorable. They were also extremely cowardly and stupid.

One day intrepid Awat filled a large basket with sweet-scented *monaretschi* or *sobri* bananas and carried them to sell at the Matchadus colony. But, on his arrival there, Awat generously distributed the sweet bananas free to all Matchadus who had gathered around him. The Matchadus ate the bananas and relished their delightful taste very much. Awat fearlessly asked them how they liked the bananas. They discourteously ignored his question and put one to him :

"Where does the fruit which you have brought grow ? On a vine or a tree ?" they asked curiously.

Awat answered promptly that it grew on a big tall tree. Then the Matchadus whispered among themselves :

"Let us force this man to show us the tree. When we get the fruit thereof, we shall devour him the first thing."

So, on pain of immediate death, they forced Awat to show them the coveted tree. But, before leading them away, the adventurous young man said :

"On my way here, I saw a batch of designing people. I secretly listened to what they had to say. This is what I learned. They are scheming to come over to your colony to steal all your money, valuable gongs, precious beads and cloth. I will willingly show you the tree which yields this luscious fruit. Let all the grown-up male members among you come with me. But, first of all, bring out all your money, valuable gongs, precious beads and cloth from your homes and conceal them in the cache in a cave near your colony. Then, after removing all your valuables, put your wives and children in your houses and fasten all the doors from the outside. When the thieves come to your colony, they will hear voices from within your houses and run away by themselves in great fear."

The simple Matchadus did exactly as Awat advised. He eagerly helped them in removing their precious property and depositing it in the innermost cache in a cave which he himself pointed out. Afterwards, they shut their wives and children securely in their houses.

The grown-up male members of the Matchadus joyfully ambled after Awat in blissful anticipation of the fruit which would so soon be theirs. The young man led them to the foot of a gigantic *simul* cotton tree (*Bombax Malabaricum*), the circumference of which was fifty cubits and whose branches were heavily laden with half-ripening bolls of cotton. Awat said to them :

"Now squat together on the ground near the tree and wait while I cut it down for you with my axe."

Awat cut the tree in such a way as to let it fall on them all. When it was about to topple, he shouted aloud :

"Now look up at the tree and stretch your hands aloft to get the fruits."

So all the Matchadus in close concourse raised their outstretched hands towards the falling tree. When it fell with a tremendous crash, the tree instantaneously killed all the assembled Matchadus. Whereupon Awat speedily returned to their colony and set fire to their houses. All the female Matchadus with their young children were burnt alive. The whole village of the Matchadus was soon reduced to ashes.

After this, Awat returned to his own village bringing with him all the money, valuable gongs, precious beads and cloth

which he could carry at one stretch. He made himself the sole possessor of all the Matchadus' wealth. Later, he married a beautiful girl of his choice and settled down in the land formerly lorded over by the Matchadus. As the years passed many of his own people came to dwell with him.

Awat built a big village on the bank of the river and ruled over it wisely as its indisputable *Nokma* (or *Headman*). With passing time Awat grew richer and more powerful. While he lived, he was acclaimed the rightful natural king of the colony and the regions round about by all his loyal subjects.

—Told by Tokang Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Chasatgiri, District Garo Hills.

JERENO, THE ORPHAN

Once upon a time there lived in a village in Achik Asong an orphan boy named Jerang who had lost his parents when he was about five summers old. He had no other relations to turn to for help; and as no one in the village could look after him or give him food, he decided to enter the forest himself in search of wild fruit and edible roots. This he did; and when he had penetrated deeply into the forest he came upon a tree laden with delicious fruits which he immediately climbed to satisfy his great hunger.

While Jereng was in the tree enjoying himself eating, a pair of terrible cannibals, half men and half tigers, known as the Matchadus, came by. They were both hirsute and they looked violent. They espied the orphan high up in the tree and begged him for some of the luscious fruits which he was eating. Obliging, Jereng vigorously shook the tree, causing a shower of fruit to descend near the couple. But they failed to partake of it. Instead, they complained that the fruit had fallen on dirty ground and was therefore polluted. They now asked him to pluck some fruit with his own hands and lower it to them by means of his toes. At first Jereng was suspicious of the terrible two and would not listen to their request. However, when they assured him that no harm would come to him, the orphan half-reluctantly let down some fruit with his toes. Promptly the Matchadus seized him by the feet, pulled him out of the tree, tied him up in a cage, and carried him to their home. There they had a young son of their own who was about the same age as Jereng.

On the following day the Matchadus said to their own child: "We are going to cultivate the fields. Kill this boy and cook him well for our evening meal."

When his parents had departed, the young Matchadu, looking at the orphan, said:

"We Matchdus are all dark-skinned. You men are fair-skinned. Pray, tell me how you become so."

Jereng answered:

"When we bathe, we do so in boiling water. If you want to be as fair as man, let me loose and I will boil water and bathe you."

The young Matchadu eagerly freed the captured boy; and Jereng promptly began to heat some water. When it had reached the boiling point, he said to the young Matchadu :

"Now take off your clothes and go down to the pig-sty under the house. Sit still there and I will pour the water upon you."

The unsuspecting Matchadu youngster did as he was told. Jereng speedily poured the boiling water upon him, and soon the Matchadu died of the burns which he received.

Jereng now hastily clad himself in his victim's clothes, and smeared dirty, black soot all over his body until he exactly resembled the dead boy. He then cooked his body well for the parents' meal. At dusk the mother and father returned from the fields and, without squeamishness, began to eat their evening meal which was elaborately served. After a while they remarked idly :

"This meat smells like the flesh of our own child."

The orphan promptly replied : "Dear parents, I killed the boy and cooked his body as you told me. Perhaps, in the midst of toil in dressing the meat, a few drops of my perspiration got into it."

This silenced the hungry couple and they finished their repast without further comment.

Sometime later, Jereng pretended that he was afflicted with great sorrow. When the Matchadus questioned him concerning his sadness, the boy said to them :

"I am your only child; and you are getting old. Who knows when you will die? Yet, you have not shown me any of your wealth. Therefore, it is clear that you do not love me!"

The parents to remove his anxiety promptly revealed to him all their possessions. On the following day, when the Matchadus had left the house, the orphan hid all their money, jewels and cloth on the opposite bank of the river.

A few days later Jereng begged the couple to take him to the river to bathe. When they arrived there, he asked them to let him learn to swim, though in truth, the orphan was an excellent swimmer. The parents flatly refused to grant his request telling him that he would certainly be drowned. The boy would not listen to their pleas, but cried out the more, until finally the Matchadus reluctantly gave him permission to try. Whereupon the orphan adroitly leaped into the water and swam swiftly to the

other side. There he divested himself of the clothes of the dead young Matchadu, and shouted triumphantly to the parents of the dead boy :

"You, Matchadus, have devoured your own child. Look, I am the child of man whom you seized by treachery. See, I have all your wealth and precious cloth. Your own iniquity overwhelms you now."

The Matchadus were beside themselves with rage against the insolent boy ; but they could do nothing about it, since neither of them knew how to swim. The orphan cried out to them once more :

"If you want to cross the river over here, sit on the backs of earthen pitchers and row them on. If you want to cross quickly, punch holes in the pitchers."

The gullible Matchadus followed this advice and were consequently drowned.

Jereng now gathered up the possessions and wandered away from the river side. By and by he came to a cave where a python dwelt. The orphan quickly killed the huge snake, skinned the body whole, keeping the head intact, and jointed to the rest of the skin, and put the whole affair out in the sun to dry. Afterwards, he made a long one-piece bag of the skin into which he put his money, jewels and cloth. At night he himself slipped into the skin to sleep.

The cave in which Jereng concealed himself was near the jhum cultivation of a wealthy man who had two beautiful daughters. One day while the girls were driving away parrots and sparrows from their father's field, they passed the orphan's cave. Jereng saw them and fell in love with the younger sister. When the younger girl cried out to shoot away the birds, the orphan answered her from inside the python skin ; but he remained silent when the other girl shouted. Curiously the younger daughter went into the cave from which the strange sound issued and saw Jereng emerging from the python skin.

Now the orphan was a very handsome young man with black glossy hair and strong muscular body. The girl fell in love with him on the spot. Jereng showed her all his money, jewels and precious cloth and said to her :

"If you want to marry me, hide yourself for several days ; if

your parents happen to find you, tell them that you want to be married to a python."

When the girl reached home, she did as the orphan had advised. She concealed herself in a granary, while her parents and relations searched high and low for her; and finally gave her up for lost. It was then that she was discovered by a servant of the family. He brought her home promptly to her parents. With great emotion they begged her to give a reason for her unusual behaviour.

"Why did you run away and hide yourself?" they asked anxiously.

The girl answered coyly: "Because there is a python in a cave near our field whom I wish to marry. Pray let me do so."

The young girl's parents were too shocked at first to answer anything. They could hardly believe their own ears. When they had found their tongues, they retorted:

"But, darling, you are so beautiful and accomplished. We have been looking for a nice young man to marry you to. What have lost your mind that you want to wed a python?"

The girl, however, remained adamant. She turned a deaf ear to all attempts to swerve her from her strange purpose. In fact, she even threatened to starve herself to death unless her parents consented to her marriage to the python. Her pertinacity prevailed and the sorrowing parents reluctantly had to yield to her wishes. Accordingly, they gave her a separate house in which to live. At once the young bride-to-be ordered her strongest servants to fetch the python from the cave to her new home.

The servants went to the cave as pointed out by the girl; and when they saw the huge snake lying motionless on the ground they thought that it was dead. However, when it stirred while they were handling it, they concluded that it was a live snake in one of its trances. They brought it directly to the girl's house. Although Jereng with all his money, jewels and cloth was inside the python skin, no one was aware of the fact, except his future wife. All who beheld it believed it to be a living python. Furthermore, none of the onlookers cared to examine the reptile at closer range to ascertain the truth. And so the young girl and the python were duly married.

At midnight on the wedding day the bride was heard to

utter a loud cry. Her father immediately sent some people to her house to discover what had happened. They peered into the dwelling house and beheld a very handsome young man sitting with the young girl. Immediately they darted back to the anxious father and related to him what they had witnessed. He would not believe their words. At last to find out for himself, he went to the house, and, with his own eyes, saw the handsome young man sitting with his daughter prinked with costly necklace. He also noted that the house was full of money, jewels and precious cloth. The father was astonished at the sight which met his eyes ; but, at the same time, he had a feeling of great happiness and contentment.

Now, the bride's elder sister had also witnessed the good fortune of her younger sister and decided to make the successful experiment herself. Accordingly, she hid herself for several days as her sister had previously done. Later she was discovered by her parents ; whereupon, she, too, earnestly implored them that she might be married to a python. The parents, thereupon, built her a separate house as they had done for her younger sister and brought a real live python to live with her. She was duly wedded to this python.

At midnight on the wedding day the elder sister was heard to utter a loud cry ; but no one went to find out what was really the matter with her. The next morning they could not find the new bride ; for the real python has swallowed her whole. The python was killed and the girl's dead body discovered in its stomach.

Now, the fortunate younger sister decided not to reveal the truth about her husband. Instead she preferred to leave the world guessing and puzzled by the riddle of the difference between her good luck and her sister's sad misfortune. In the course of time, Jereng and his bride were blessed with many good, strong and noble sons and daughters, who became kings, chieftains, brave warriors and gifted queens in their days.

—Told by Dingban Marak Raksam
at Village Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

THE CANNIBAL DEMON

Once in a deserted village near the modern village of Dambo-Rongjeng¹ in Achik Asong, a man lay very seriously ill with a malignant fever. All the other villagers had moved away from the village to their temporary huts in their respective jhum fields in order to weed and watch over their crops for the rest of the season. Only the sick man, with his wife and infant, remained in the lonely village.

One day the wife took up a *dao* and went out to fetch some medicine for her husband from a village physician living not very far away. She consigned her infant to the care of the bedridden man. As she was returning home, the woman was accosted by a man dressed in the garb of a full-fledged Achik householder. At the sight of him a sudden spasm of fear passed through her body. The man introduced himself to her as her husband's nephew and asked how his sick relative fared. The woman instinctively felt that the man was lying, but she answered his question carefully as she measured his thick-set figure and dark inscrutable face.

Her suspicions were well-founded; for the stranger was a cannibal demon or ghou, known to the Achiks as Mehmang Gitting. He was a *Tsine Nat* (bad type of spirit of the woods) who was accustomed to assume a human form in order to decoy human beings to their destruction.

So, the stranger continued to talk in familiar terms with the woman, trying his utmost to drive away suspicion from her mind as to the veracity of his claim of relationship to her husband. It was his wont to accost people without notice. He would have devoured the woman then and there, but for fear of the *dao* in her hand. This type of demon is terribly afraid of iron, steel and copper. If a person whom he accosts has any piece of metal on his person, the false impersonator will refrain from molesting him. Instead he will try his utmost to suavely persuade the person to part with the metallic object. Then he will pounce upon him and devour him immediately.

Now, the woman of the ancient village near modern Dambo-Rongjeng strongly doubted the stranger's claim to relationship

with her sick husband ; for she knew all his nephews personally. She was inwardly convinced that the man was surely an impostor ; still she held him to be nothing other than a real human being.

The stranger entreated the woman to take out of her house all articles of metal, steel or copper ; then he would pay her husband a cordial visit in the evening. Although this seemed a strange request, the wife of the sick man readily complied with it. She had no idea that the strange demand had any bearing on his intended visit. The stranger then spoke a few sympathetic words concerning her husband's illness and, in a jiffy, disappeared into the deep woods.

On reaching back home the wife of the sick man diligently removed all the articles of iron, steel and copper which she could find in the house. That evening the faked nephew of the sick man arrived. Just as he put his foot on the threshold of the house, the sick man drew his last breath. Now absolute weirdness reigned in the house. The woman felt precariously alone. She trembled from sheer terror and helplessness as she sat on the bamboo-floor, holding her infant in her arms.

The stranger politely informed the widow that he would sleep beside the corpse of his deceased uncle during the night. Accordingly, he prepared a bed close to the dead man and lay down smilingly. Although, she was keenly susceptible to the dreariness and perilousness of the situation, the woman huddled up with her infant near the hearth and could not keep her eyes open. It was not long before her constant nodding turned into serene sleep as she dropped into unconsciousness.

In the silence of the night, the baby suddenly cried vociferously to be fed. The woman's sleep was thus abruptly broken. She was terrified at the sight which met her half-awakened eyes. There in the centre of the room in the glow of his own phosphorescent light, sat a grisly monster with one glaring eye set weirdly in the forehead. The monster was contentedly crunching the bones of her dead husband. For a moment the widow was too shocked to move ; but gradually recovering herself, she said bravely to the hideous figure glaring at her with its one eye that she wanted to take the baby outside for a bit of fresh air. In a deep sepulchral voice the monster smacking its lips, grunted, "All right".

With speed the woman tied her baby tightly to her back

with a piece of cloth and dashed outside. Then she plunged tempestuously towards the *jhum* fields. The strain was too much for her and she swooned away before she reached her destination. When she came to her senses she found herself surrounded by her friendly villagers. They stood gaping at her with wide open mouths. After a while, some ventured to ask her what had happened. Then the woman passionately narrated her harrowing tale. Later the villagers went in a body to her house, but they found no sign of the corpse. The demon or ghoul had devoured every bit of it. Not a drop of blood or a vestige of flesh or bone was to be seen. Even the dead man's bedstead and clothes had all been consumed by the avaricious cannibal demon.

—Told by Phlonath Momin Gabil
at Rongjeng District Garo Hills.

THE GHOSTS' LABOUR ON HIRE

In ancient days ghosts and men had common dealings. For example, ghosts were accustomed to hire themselves out to men and receive for their labours rice and other commodities. Sometimes the two used to exchange articles of value. In all these dealings with the supernatural spirits man was the one who benefited most ; for the ghosts were satisfied with very little. As a matter of fact their method of exchange and remuneration was exactly the opposite of that used by man. For example, a few grains of rice was more acceptable to the ghosts than a basketful of the same. A grain of cooked rice was enough for the midday meal of a ghost ; and a tiny piece of dried fish or a fragment of tobacco was sufficient recompense for a day's labour. The ghosts were highly incensed if large quantities of anything were offered to them.

Another thing. These laborious ghosts could not be seen by human eyes. Only their presence was felt, their voices heard and their labours witnessed. When a ghost was at work weeding in a *jhum* field, the weeds were seen to be uprooted stage by stage as if done by human hands ; but the worker himself was invisible. One thing more. People in those days had to be very careful of the ghosts' susceptibilities ; for the spirits were very easily offended.

Now, the last instance of ghosts' labour on hire took place in the land of Naphak. Here one day a number of ghosts were engaged in weeding the paddy fields of a well-to-do land-owner. They laboured diligently all morning and at noon rested to take their noonday meal. While they were thus enjoying their frugal repast, the son of the landlord came along. He was a spoiled child, mischievous and very naughty. For sport, he would split wood and tree stumps with his spear, thrust that weapon into bunches of wild plantains, and jog about spitting freely left and right and in every direction. He was not in the least careful about his movements.

The son of the landlord came to the spot where the invisible ghostly labourers were enjoying their repast. As usual he was up to his customary pranks. He flung his spear at the stumps

where the ghosts were sitting and standing and unknowingly drove them away. He expectorated freely and doused some of the ghosts with his saliva. The ghosts greatly resented his wanton conduct and felt greatly insulted. With loud yells and wild shrieks they all departed from the place. The naughty youngster then heard their voices ; but saw nothing. Neither did he know the extent of the damage he had caused the invisible laborious beings.

Ever since that fatal day no ghost has returned to labour for man. The spirits beheld man's unreasonableness and ingratitude and would have no further dealings with him.

—*Told by Shanon Shangma Tegitdi*
at Village Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.

MIJANGGI

The Achiks believe that every animate and inanimate object has its unseen counterpart or astral body. They believe also that the inanimate universe is akin to sentient life. So, when the counterpart immanent in an object, loving or lifeless, is removed or spirited away, the object itself which exists in the physical sphere, perishes or ceases to exist in its present form, thereby clearly indicating the presence of an ultimate vital substance within the thing itself which is independent of it for its existence.

For example, rice, the most important grain of the Achiks, has its invisible counterpart pervading the visible grain. This invisible counterpart is known as *Mijanggi*¹ whose benign mother is known as *Minima Rokkime*.² It is to appease the latter that the Achiks perform sacrificial rites known as *Ahkrita*³ on their *jhum* fields before the sowing of paddy seeds, as well as, on the tender paddy plants during weeding season.

During harvest *Mijanggi* can be treacherously spirited away by evil demons, the chief of whom is known as *Chual Chonggal*.⁴ To prevent the spiriting away of this inherent counterpart of rice, or *Mijanggi*, from the standing stalks, the Achik cultivators every day during harvest time, carefully tie a knot or two at the top of all the grain-bearing paddy stalks.

—Told by *Jingna Marak Raksam*
at *Village Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.*

ORIGIN OF NIGHTMARE

Out of the cutter which was used to sever the umbilical cord of Manè Paltè, the Mother Earth, at the time of her birth, there grew a soporific *muni* plant with broad red leaves and long red stalks in the old country of Grenang Dolwari.¹ One day a man, named Niba Ajepa Jonja Giljeps, was going to the Anthiracha Ahkhanggitel market² to purchase cloth, jewels and glittering ornaments for his daughters Ajo Mehchik and Gilje Tira. On the way he stumbled over a stem of the *muni* plant. He took a couple of roots of the new plant and put them in his garden. The remaining roots were picked up later on by Matchi Awek Dohreng Thangsek³ in order to grow them on Koasi Minduri Hill.⁴

As Matchi Awek was carrying away the roots one of them fell to the ground and was picked up later on by a woman known as Ahning Node Chining Bangje⁵ who carefully planted it in her garden.

In the course of time a ghost, named Mehman Mithdei Krim Mithdei, obtained the *muni* plant from the old country of Grenang Dolwari. This ghost questioned Salgra as to the benefit that would accrue from possessing the plant. Salgra replied :

"This is the plant which brings deep sleep on anyone at anytime. For boys, put the plant inside the steps of a house ; for girls, put it under paddy-pounding mortars. The effect of the plant on these boys and girls will be a feeling of pressure on their chests and powerlessness to move or speak while asleep. This feeling will be known as *mehmangsina* and the pressure, called *mang sina*, that is, the pressure of a ghost. So your name will be in the mouths of human beings for ever."

The ghost obeyed the advice of Salgra and kept the *muni* plant ever with him. Since that time ghosts have been playing pranks on mankind by means of the *muni* plant according to the directions of Salgra. The *muni* plant when used by ghosts during sleep has ever since been the immediate cause of what is known as nightmare.

—Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

TURNING INTO ANIMALS

The Achiks believe that human beings can transform themselves, consciously or unconsciously, into animals, such as tigers, elephants, deer, boars, foxes, wolves, bears, flying squirrels, rats, and so on. This does not mean that the whole body of a person is consciously or unconsciously transformed; but that his or her *jabirong*¹ or *jachri*², that is, the powerful life giving principle which is as infinitesimal as the minutest fraction of the tip of a porcupine's spine and white in colour, is being projected and engrafted into the body of an animal while the person is asleep. The *jabirong* of its own volition exudes from the nasal passage of a person and circulates through the air. It may then enter freely into any animal.

Thus, while asleep a person can be psychically transformed into a tiger or any living animal. In waking moments the self-same person can fully recollect everything he did as a tiger or whatever kind of animal he became by the entry of his *jabirong* into it. He can, likewise, narrate with clarity to others, as a man, his past activities or experiences as that animal. For instance, while awake, a person who has been psychically transformed into a tiger, can tell other people of the places he has visited, the persons and things he has seen, the events occurring in distant places he has witnessed—all as a tiger; but which he has never experienced as a man.

Some Achiks know a process which consists in the use of certain medicines and mantras or incantations and some sort of divination by which a person can, at will, turn himself or herself into a tiger or any other animal. Likewise, they know another special process by which this turning of human beings into tigers or any animals can be easily annulled or put a stop to.

Once the *jabirong* or *jachri* of a person has entered into a particular animal, it will always through his or her whole life-time enter into the self-same animal while that person is asleep, unless or until some process or exorcism is resorted to by that person or his or her relatives so as to prevent the *jabirong* from its wonted course and retain it permanently in the original human body.

It is said that ancient Achiks knew the secret art of turning their own bodies into tigers or crocodiles or snakes or any beast or reptile at their sweet will and of remaining as such until the time they desired to resume their human forms; and that, by thus transforming themselves into animals and reptiles, they could kill their enemies. It is said, too, that these same Achiks knew the art of employing real tigers, elephants, snakes, and other forest dwellers, to kill any particular person or persons whom they hated, or their personal enemies of whom they wished to be rid. The wild beasts and wily reptiles could be summoned by means of certain mantras and dispatched on their errand of death.

It is believed now by the Achiks that when a person has acquired the skill of projecting the all powerful human principle or *jabirong*, and of bringing it back to its place or rest at his sweet will through the medium of certain practices in this direction, he can also secure the power of dispatching anywhere and of keeping it in that place as long as he likes. Such a person can also bring about the death of another, anywhere, anytime, at any place and in any manner he consciously chooses.

Now, if a person realizes that during sleep he or she is psychically turned into a particular animal and tells other people too much of his or her past activities or experiences as that particular animal, the *jabirong* of its own choice sometimes stops projecting itself and entering into that animal.

Likewise, if the animal into which the *jabirong* of a person is permanently engrafted dies a violent death or is killed, the person whose *jabirong* is thus engrafted in it will also die. However, he or she can be revived if a little quantity of the blood, particularly the blood of the tail, of the self-same animal is immediately fetched and given to the person to be imbibed at once. The survivor can, without any information on the matter, accurately disclose where and how that particular animal, in which his *jabirong* was engrafted, met its death.

Finally, if a person psychically turns himself into a tiger or animal through the use of special *mantras* and processes, he or she, in order to confirm the art of remaining such at will, has to pass certain tests to be conducted by the ruler of the particular race of animals into which his *jabirong* is accustomed to be engrafted. In such a case, turning oneself into a tiger or animal is deliberate

and conscious. To some extent or other, human beings oftentimes despatch the *jabirong* and recall it to its original abode ; but this is all done rather unconsciously. In these circumstances a person's activities or experiences as an animal may sometimes be mistakenly interpreted as dreams.

—Told by Jakwil Shangma Snal
at Village Awangga, District Garo Hills.

RECHU ANA .

The Achiks believe that the destiny of every human being has been preordained by Din-gipa Bahbra Muhgipa Jaring, the Divine Mother, the great Mathematical Thinker, who has also fashioned the size, height, looks and constitution of each person alive. At the birth of every child into the land of the living, the spirits of the element world as well as the spirits of all living beings muster strong under Din-gipa Bahbra for a fraction of an infinitesimally short time at the place of birth to ascertain by means of spreading out their webs whose lot it shall be to cut off the life of the new born babe. Each of the spirits present has his own mysteriously woven web, known as *Rech*u or *Amrech*u, that is the Web of Destiny. This process of predetermination of the mode of death or end of human being at the time of its birth by spirits of all sorts of nondescript beings in the world is known among the Achiks as *Rech*u *Ana* or the Spreading Out of the Web of Destiny.

Also, at the time of birth of every human being a guardian angel or spirit takes charge of the child. This angel or spirit is called Kalkame Kalgra by the Achiks. It is he who protects the child throughout its life. When the time of his or her death arrives, Kalkame Kalgra gives the person over to the element or living being whose lot it is to cut the link of life from the body of the person.

Now, there was once a man named Deng among the Achiks in Achik Asong who found out the truth of *Rech*u *Ana* or Predestination. One time as he was on a journey through a deep forest night overcame him. His village was very far away ; and it was so pitch dark that he could not find his way home. So he took shelter for the night under a gigantic *Awek* tree (*Tetrameles nudiflora*). About this time the birth of a human being occurred among his relations in his native village.

Just towards dawn Deng was awakened by the sound of peculiar voices overhead. They were the voices of the spirits of all the elements and the spirits of all living beings going to Deng's village in order to ascertain whose lot it would be to finally end the life of the new-born babe. Among them were the spirits

of earth, water, trees, plants, snakes, tigers, fire, malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, plague, bears, elephants, and so on. They called upon the *Awek* tree under which Deng was snugly sleeping and said :

"You seem not to be ready, *Awek* tree. Aren't you coming to the web-spreading?"

The tree answered : "I have a guest ; so I cannot come." Then, turning to the spirit of the *Boldak* tree (*Schima wallichii*), the *Awek* tree said : "Will you please take my web and spread it out on my behalf?"

"Gladly will I do this for you," replied the *Boldak* tree. Then he joined the others in their flight and soon all was silence again.

A short time after, the forest was again a hubbub of voices. The spirits of the elements and of all living beings were returning to their respective abodes, the Predestination ceremony being already completed. As they passed it, the *Awek* tree asked : "In whose web did the child's death fall?"

"In the tiger's, the tiger's," they replied.

"At what stage of the child's life?" continued the *Awek* tree.

They replied : "At that stage of his life when he begins to speak in a husky voice ; when the bud of his understanding begins to sprout ; when he should be strong enough to use his legs and walk about."

"What is the name of the mother of the child?" the *Awek* tree went on.

"Chelse," answered the spirits.

When he returned the web to the *Awek* tree, the spirit of the *Boldak* tree said : "Here is your web. Take it, my friend."

All was silent once more. In his bed of leaves beneath the *Awek* tree, Deng tossed about restlessly : for Chelse was the name of his niece.

In the morning the traveller hastily returned to his village where he discovered that his niece Chelse had given birth to a baby-boy on the previous night. On inquiry he ascertained that the birth of the child coincided with the time he first heard the voices in the forest. He made known to no one his secret concerning the child's destiny ; but determined to do all he could

for his new relation. He firmly resolved to devise all humanly possible means of protecting the child from the impending destiny. And so he kept diligent guard over the child day and night. With his sharp milam (two-edged sword) and spi (rectangular shield) he remained constantly in the presence of the little boy. His determination to save the life of the child from the course of Destiny never wavered for an instant.

One day when the boy grew up to be a husky youngster, Deng took his nephew down to a river to bathe. He let the sturdy lad walk before him. It was the day fixed by Din-gipa Bahbra for the tiger to cut short the life of the child. As the two, uncle and nephew, were returning home from their bath, a tiger suddenly leaped out of a place of concealment and rushed at the child to kill him. Deng, being always alert and wideawake, in the twinkling of an eye, cut down the tiger with a mighty blow of his sharp milam and severed its head. With a great feeling of relief that, by his indomitable will and resolute determination, he had smashed the pall of Destiny that hung over his nephew, Deng exultingly yelled out: "Ka Sangma, Ebang Goera, Gualgija, Jajagija, Jajumangchiba Jakharchiba. Hei-wa-o!"

As he shouted out these triumphant words of victory, Deng danced wildly on the ground and finally stepped proudly on the severed head of the tiger.

But the course of Destiny on Deng's nephew was not to be averted by a mere frail human being.

After his own demonstration of joy, the uncle shouted to his nephew and told him to imitate his words and actions. "He, the young hero, must learn the joy and ecstasy of triumph over fallen enemies who are worth of his steel, like the one before us," Deng said to himself. The youngster thereupon repeated his uncle's exultant shouts of victory, imitating the tone and action of Deng in the best possible manner. While he jumped upon the severed head of the tiger, the boy's small leg slipped into the jaws and the sharp canine teeth deeply prodded it. The boy instantly tried to extricate his leg, and in doing so made the wound deeper and wider. Deng himself was finally obliged to force apart the jaws of the severed tiger's head and carefully take out his nephew's wounded leg from the vice-like grip.

The wound caused by the tiger's sharp teeth proved fatal.

So much blood was lost that the youngster fainted on the spot. Deng hurried the stricken lad back to the village. As the shades of the night were falling, the youngster died of haemorrhage. His young, tender childlike life was cut off by the tiger after all as was really preordained long, long ago at the moment of the child's birth by the spirits of the elements and all living beings, when they met for the *Rechu Ana* ceremony.

—Told by *Kacha Shangma Dawa*
at *Village Simsangiri, District Garo Hills.*

THE FISHING HAWK

The Achiks believe that the fishing-hawk, known as *ramgong* or *kongklong*, was one of leaders of the fighting hosts of Misi Saljong in the grand old days. It was also conceded to have been one of the famous warriors who are capable of wielding immense power and influence over the lives of other living beings. As a favourite of the great god, Misi Saljong, the hawk possessed potential occult art and mystic influence.

Now, once in ancient days, a man named Ginjang went out into the jungle to hunt deer and wild boar with his bow and arrows. He was an expert archer. In the course of his journey he had to cross a river in order to penetrate into the deep woods in which he intended to hunt. By the side of the river he came upon two *ramgongs* or fishing-hawks perching on a tree, peering intently into the water below, waiting for fish to come to the surface. Ginjang watched them in silence, unperceived by the birds, and placed an arrow quietly in his sturdy bow. A moment later one of the hawks swooped down like lightning, seized a large fish in a flash and started back for the tree again. As he did so, Ginjang let loose his arrow and killed the *ramgong* outright. It fell to the ground with a thud still clinging to the fish with its iron-like talons. Ginjang discovered that it was a female *ramgong*.

When the male fishing-hawk saw what had happened to his beloved spouse, he flew away to a safe distance, perched on the branch of a tall tree, and poured down ominous imprecations upon the hunter, saying :

"Thou hast murdered my beloved wife in order to satisfy thy greed. Thou hast bereaved me of my dear spouse. Thou wilt also wander about in sorrow and misery without wife and children. On account of thy greed thy property will all be lost. I curse thee. I condemn thee. Be thou accursed. Be thou much mortified."

Some months later while Ginjang was away at a market, his house was struck by lightning at night and destroyed by fire with his wife, children and all his household effects in it. His

wife and children were burned to death. The next day when Gijang returned from the market, he found the charred bodies of his wife and children and saw the burnt posts of his house standing like grim spectres. He himself was suffering from an attack of trachoma with which he had become infected in the market. In a few months he was totally blind.

And so, in this manner the terrible curse of the deeply aggrieved male *ramgong* came to pass to the very letter. Hence the Achiks say : "If you have of necessity to kill the fishing-hawk ; kill the couple, both male and female. Never kill only one ; for, if you do, the survivor will breathe upon you his devastating anathema which will not fail in its effect and purpose."

—Told by Chengkot alias Biporsingh Shangma Agitok
at Village Senabor (near Kamrup-Khetri), District Kamrup.

THE BULBUL

The bulbul once went down to the subterranean region. While he was returning to the terrestrial surface, he came across a large number of wild bananas just ripening on their trees. As he was extremely hungry, he consumed an enormous amount of the luscious fruit swallowing in his greed myriads of banana seeds. Upon reaching the upper world his stomach began to ache and ultimately he suffered a severe attack of dysentery due to his excessive consumption of different kinds of wild bananas along with their seeds. In a paroxysm of pain he flew hither and thither passing copious stools everywhere; so that banana seeds were scattered over the face of the whole earth. These germinated, and, in the course of time, wild banana trees sprang up on the hills, slopes, and in valleys. This is how all sorts of banana trees came to exist on the terrestrial surface.

Due to the bird's suffering from dysentery, when blood and mucus passed freely from his body, the portion around his rump became spattered with blood. His descendants, the bulbuls, known as *kebebrot*s in the Achik language, are still seen in the jungles of Achik Asong up to this day. The feathers covering the anus of the bulbuls still remain red as the inherited blood-stained part, signifying that their ancient patriarch once suffered from dysentery, owing to his indiscriminate eating of different kinds of wild bananas at one stretch.

—Told by Kimchang Shangma Agitok
at Village Sohragiri, District Garo Hills.

THE FAITHFUL HOG AND THE CLEVER DOG

Once upon a time in ages long gone by there lived in a little village in Achik Asong, an old childless couple. The man, when younger, found nothing more pleasant than to roam through the deep forests, bow and arrows in hand, with his faithful dog searching for wild beasts and jungle fowl. In this way he secured a means of livelihood for himself and his young wife. However, as they made no provisions for a rainy day or had no near relatives to turn to in time of need, old age slowly crept upon them, when they had creaks in their bones; and they were hopelessly left in a lurch. The man was now too old to use his bow and arrow; for he had not the strength and dexterity to wield them properly. Still the couple had to eat; and the only recourse left open to them was to till the soil.

Now, as has been said, the old pair was childless. However, they kept a pet hog and a pet dog which helped to dispel their loneliness and managed, to some extent, to take the place of children in their home. So, one day the old woman said to the two animals:

"Go to the field, you sluggards, and till the soil there if you want to enjoy the continued luxury of cooked rice. If you won't work, you shall only get rice-husks for food."

Both the hog and the dog started willy-nilly early next morning to work in the jhum field. Since they both loved cooked rice above anything else, they decided that they ought to make an effort to secure it. So they went to the field. But it was such a hot day and the sun shone so fiercely that it was almost impossible to work under it. The hog did not let the great heat deter him. He worked in the scorching sun the whole day, furrowing as hard as he could. His companion, however, who was a lazy, good-for-nothing beast took advantage of the cool shade of a nearby tree and slept the whole day through. At eventide the hog started for home; and the dog, suddenly awakening, exercised his lazy limbs by running hither and thither all over the newly-turned soil until the whole field was covered with his footprints.

When the beasts reached home, the dog promptly stepped up to the old woman and boldly said :

"I have worked hard the whole day under the scorching sun, while this lazy hog slept comfortably under the shade of a tree. I am dead tired and hungry. Please give me my cooked rice."

The hog could hardly believe his ears. He was in a tearing temper. He shouted angrily :

"He's a dirty liar. It was I who worked hard all day long furrowing and turning up soil. That cursed cur did nothing but sleep all day long under the shade of a tree."

In the face of such conflicting assertions, the old woman was at a loss to give a definite decision. At length she made up her mind to go to the field and satisfy herself by actually scrutinizing the work done. There she found the cultivated plot all covered with the dog's footprints and so made the decision in his favour. The faithful hog's fruitful labour went for naught.

In the course of the process of relationships between human beings and domesticated beasts, what was once done was repeated continually throughout the succeeding generations as if sanctioned and confirmed by supernatural powers. So we find that now-a-days cooked rice is freely given to the dogs for a mistaken industry; while for a supposed laziness, rice-husks have since served as the food of the hogs.

The dog wags its tail in pretended thankfulness to man and eats greedily as if enjoying the fruits of its labours; whereas the swine always utters murmuring grunts when it is being given food which consists mostly of husks and other refuse. Small wonder then that the dog takes pride in attaching himself more closely to man indoors and outdoors; while the swine, in the bitterness of a wounded spirit at man's injustice, prefers to wallow in its mud at home, forever grumbling at man's short-sighted decision and continual ill-treatment.

*—Told by Srimati Dingjang Shangma Rongmuthy
at Village Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.*

THE TIGER AND THE PANGOLIN

Long, long ago, the tiger was unable to kill the pangolin outright because of the latter's hard, thick, scaly skin. Whenever the pangolin saw the king of the jungle, it adroitly rolled itself into a ball, allowing the wild beast no means of driving home into its body his sharp, menacing teeth and long, dangerous claws.

One day the pangolin jokingly remarked that the tiger was supremely stupid not to discover a simple way of killing him. All the wild beasts had to do was to attack the pangolin when he found it stretched out idly on its back on the ground. Unknown to the boaster, the tiger overheard the idle jest of the pangolin, and mused to himself :

"Well, I shall soon see for myself whether or not this clever pangolin, who calls me stupid, is himself really so brilliant."

The next time the tiger accosted the pangolin, he sprang upon it so savagely before it had time to roll itself into a ball, that he killed it with little difficulty. In this way the tiger discovered the method of killing the pangolin ; and so, ever since that fatal day, tigers have been killing pangolins for food.

*—Told by Rimjang Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rugapara, District Garo Hills.*

THE TUSKER AND THE PORCUPINE

One day a lordly tusker was having a refreshing drink of water in a clear stream. Suddenly the water got quite muddy. The tusker grew very angry at this and rushed up the stream to discover who dared defile the water. As he considered himself the biggest and strongest being on earth,, the lordly tusker was at a loss to understand who had the impertinence to dirty his drinking place. At length the angry animal espied a porcupine just entering his burrow. The latter had just finished bathing in the stream. The tusker approached and trumpeted :

"Was it you who made the water muddy while I was having a drink downstream?"

The porcupine looked askance ; so the tusker bellowed :

"You, tiny creature, how dare you dirty the water in which I drink. Don't you know that I am the greatest of all beings?"

The porcupine eyed the distraught beast scornfully, and then addressed him calmly in the following words :

"How dare you come to drink the water of which I am the sole master? How dare you stand in this place of which I am the sole owner? Don't you know that I am the king of all surface and underground regions round about? Be off with you; or I'll make you sink into the ground alive."

The tusker looked with wonder at the small creature that dared to address him so. He answered :

"How is this? All other creatures acknowledge me as the greatest of all beings. Now you would say that you are greater. Prove to me and other creatures that you are really much bigger than I am."

Now the porcupine grew angry and retorted ; "How dare you speak thus to the biggest and greatest of all creatures? There is no use of your bandying words with me. Why, your whole body isn't as big as my smallest toe. Just compare the hair of your body with mine. Then you'll see."

As he said this the haughty porcupine stood up boldly at the entrance of his burrow. Only the forepart of his body was visible to the intruder ; the rest remained concealed inside his home. The tusker in reply to the arrogant speech of his

opponent, plucked one of the porcupine's bristling quills and was astounded to discover how insignificant it made the hair of his own body appear. While he was rapt in thought over this discovery, the tiny creature asked disdainfully :

"You fool, must not the body which remains concealed underground and possesses such big, strong hair be greater than your despicable carcass?" Then with a great flourish, he concluded, "Be off with you or you will soon die. You have no business to come here and insult me in this manner."

The naive tusker, sincerely believing that the porcupine was much larger than himself, judging from the comparison of their hair, dashed away as fast as he could in a panic.

Now, Gypi Jongapa Wachingpa,¹ the patriarchal head of the mole family, had been silently listening to the whole dispute. In truth he knew the identity of both animals. So, when he saw the lordly elephant running away in fear from the insignificant porcupine, he could restrain himself no longer. He just laughed and laughed and laughed for days on end. His eyes puckered into slits. So long and so hard was his laughter that he forgot to close his mouth and open his eyes for a long period of time. His bosom heaved and panted and chuckles broke from his lips. His whole body rocked and shook with laughter. The result of all this is that nowadays the upper lips of moles remain open and their eyes remain small and partially closed due to the excessive hearty laughter of their patriarchal head on the occasion of the tusker's mistaken notion of the porcupine long, long ago.

—Told by Minseng Marak Mangsang
at Village Senabor (near Kamrup-Khetri),
District Kamrup.

A WAR AMONG THE GODS

In ages long gone by there dwelt in the subterranean region a fair goddess named Ahning Noresil Chining Kimresil.¹ She was the daughter of Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare.² One day, as this fair goddess was going to the Dontila Rongmikshera³ market, she came across Misi Rusime Kalsina Misi Asima Saljong Dingsina,⁴ a son of Misi Saljong, the ruler of the upper region. At once the goddess fell headlong in love with the young god, who, in turn reciprocated her affection. They soon married each other.

According to the customary practice of the age, known as *Akhim gaa*,⁵ the young goddess went to her husband's parents' house to sojourn there for one full summer and one full winter after her marriage. She brought along her highly valued comb, known as Kihchongrek Kichongbal Nahkechong Nahkesa Kichongsil Kichongbak,⁶ shaped to the exact form of a flounder fish. One day she inserted it for safe-keeping into the wall of the house. A maid-servant known as Nokol Nosoksol Rori Nokhimchong,⁷ whose husband was called Ribo Ronggop Kni Jamdap,⁸ discovered the comb, roasted it, and devoured all of it without any one witnessing her deed.

Later Ahning Noresil Chining Kimresil searched high and low for her highly-prized comb, but could not locate it anywhere. Misi Durimit Saljong Balimit, the younger sister of Misi Rusime, told her sister-in-law that if her comb was really lost, she would make good the loss herself. But Ahning Noremsil, feeling bitterly for the missing comb, would not be appeased by any substitute. She burst out in anger, saying :

"I will not have any other comb in lieu of my Kihchongrek which is so lavishly decorated and on which is passed an auspicious mantra or incantation. My uncles and matrilineal brothers⁹ who are known as Gingbo Sallo, Itcha Rengsin, Aibodik and Asi Kalbong and Kahchiboting, will surely be offended at the loss I have incurred here. They will, no doubt, wage war against this house."

With great bitterness of heart, Ahning Noresil left the abode of her father-in-law and went to her mother's house where she

narrated to her uncles and matrilineal brothers what had defallen her. These, who were known as Chiok Bokjapa, Alik Balmin, Alik Nahbanpa, Nahchi Rengsin, Bugorik Bugasil, Menpa Rongdingpa, Gingmat Ringrang Basu Gakjak, Gingbo Sallo, Itcha Rengsin, Aibodik, Asi Kalbong, Matram Takkil, Chri Gongding and Khahchiboting, all began to beat their breasts in anger against the household of Misi Saljong for the insulting treatment that had been accorded to their sister and niece as if they themselves, warriors that they were, were of no account.

For purposes of the impending warfare Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokande,¹⁰ the grandmother of Ahning Noresil Chining Kimhesil, gave birth to Dohkupa Skodottong Sahnepa Mikrimiltong,¹¹ who was accustomed to shout out : "Tak-tak-tak" every morning and evening. He was fed on the best sort of rice and rice-beer. During the war, however, he remained lethargic and inactive. Ahning Mahbitchi also gave birth to another warrior known as Ahning Ditori Chining Gangdori.¹²

When the war started Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokande captured Khorengpa Kobinpa Ganggipok Chidual,¹³ one of the warriors of Misi Saljong, and clipped off his wings and nipped his toes. The bird set off to see Dakgipa Rugipa, Mahgam Dakgipa Mande Rugipa,¹⁴ the Nature-architect, to get his wings and toes repaired. On the way he met Salgra Songdura¹⁵ who asked him where he was going. He answered :

"Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokande clipped off my wings and toes. I am going to Dakgipa Rugipa to get them answered :

Salgra Songdura detained him from proceeding farther and told him simply to sit at daybreak on a bare rock or a piece of dead wood and spread out his wings wide in the rays of the rising sun in order to regain his former beauty. He did so and the maimed wings and toes were fully restored.

The uncles and matrilineal brothers of Ahning Noresil formed an alliance with Mikkatema Stil Rongma, the goddess of Hail-storm, and set out to wage war against Misi Saljong. It now rained ceaselessly and continuously for so long a time that the whole world was overflowed. The waters reached the roof-rafters of Misi Saljong's dwelling, and he was ascribed to be practically vanquished. But the god would not admit defeat so easily.

Misi Saljong then went to Jarumeha Jabal Phanthé Okkhu-

angsi Jahpat Chongsi, the God of the Winds, and Salgra, the God of Light, and sought their assistance. They both agreed to help him; so the war was waged anew with greater ferocity. The wind blew dead and the bleak sun shone fiercely. Trees became brown and withered; bamboo stalks and growing grass shrivelled up; and the waters of all fountains and other sources dried up completely. The whole earth was thus rendered dry and scorched. So ruthlessly did the God of Wind and the God of Light wage war that the terrestrial surface seemed well nigh devastated. Rivers, springs and fountains became shallow and dry. The deep pool of Ahnang in the Ildek was reduced to knee-depth; the Dilkhang Wari¹⁶ became waist high; a mere tiny thread of water trickled out of a cavity of the pool of Mrig in the Simsang River. The shell of the mother of tortoises became cracked. Everywhere destruction was evident.

Still the embittered belligerent parties fought on to prove each other's mettle. The warriors of both sides sustained defeats and received injuries. Sometimes this side won; and sometimes that side won. It was a highly contested struggle in which there were any splendid charges, ambushes and retreats. In the throes of the maddening conflict Marang Starang¹⁷ manifested himself in the form of streams of blood and gaping wounds. Dohkupa Skodottong, as a warrior, was utterly useless for he did not fight at all.

Now at the latter stage of the war, Misi Saljong and his band of fighters got the upper hand. Khorengpa Khobinpa rushed into the thick of the battle and captured Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokande Chipuchi Rodachi Thongmitchang Pantdrang,¹⁸ the chief of Ahning Noresil's warriors and dragged her to the upper regions. The victor pulled his victim past the Gijang Bra Dilsing Gitel¹⁹ where Gongga was fishing with his hooks and nets. The latter inadvertently stepped on the captive and retarded her progress. Khorengpa Kobinpa fled in terror. Gongga then took the captive and rolled her up in a *rehkeksi* leaf to take home. Persuaded by Salgra not to kill the victim, Gongga set her free. Some compatriots of Ahning Mabitchi brought her back home. The capture of this warrior ended the ferocious conflict which had lasted for full seven summers and full seven winters. Ahning Noresil and her warriors capitulated to Misi Saljong and his allies.

Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare Nore Chire, the Goddess of Rain, fled in despair to Chikhusu. There she shed showers of tears and fainted. Dakgipa Tattara Rugipa Stura Pantura Suulgipa Imbaggipa,²⁰ the Supreme Ruler of gods and goddesses, resuscitated her. He also effected a reconciliation between the hostile parties for the benefit of all. They sunk differences and antipathies in the unfailing solvent of eternal social and business intercourse. However, ever since that time the victor have become the sole rulers of the terrestrial surface and the celestial region.

—Told by Sonaram R. Shangma
at Village Salpara, District Garo Hills.

DURAMA IMBAMA

In ancient days there lived three mighty goddesses who were respectively known as Durama Imbaba,¹ Koasi Minduri² and Ahratcha Rongbare.³ They were matrinieal-sisters to one another Koasi Minduri being the eldest. They all dwelt with Abet Rengge⁴ at Misi Nokgitcham, Ahnang Adikhang, and Tematchi Ponggro.⁵

Now, Durama Imbaba had a high-spirited, frisky monster-dog which used to kill and devour the pigs and fowls belonging to the other sisters. The latter were much annoyed by the dog's behaviour, and, as their sister would do nothing about it, they conspired together with Abet Rengge to throw Durama Imbaba out of the house. They carried out their plan and their sister was forced to leave and settle at Simsang Rikam Rongdong Bra.⁶

Soon after this the two sisters, Koasi Minduri and Ahratcha Rongbare, evicted Abet Rengge from the place as they discovered his high-handedness in his dealings with them. He settled in the subterranean region near the rills and fountains, building his house with ferns and the spiny roots of the *boltotu* tree (*mallotus roxburghianus*) in an upside down manner. He is now worshipped by the Achiks as god of rills and fountains.

Finally Koasi Minduri and Ahratcha Rongbare could not get along with each other and separated.

Now during her stay at Simsang Rikam Rongdong Bra, Durama Imbaba became exceedingly rich and powerful. Her son, named Okbongjada Wakewanel,⁷ was a regular spendthrift. He squandered his mother's money right and left. At the same time Koasi Minduri and Ahratcha Rongbare managed to squeeze large portions of wealth from their rich sister. But no matter how much they spent riotously and wastefully, the riches and wealth of Durama Imbaba remained undiminished. For this reason Achiks are accustomed now-a-days to utter the following prayer over a wild boar or a deer which they have killed :

"Let Koasi Minduri and Ahratcha Rongbare be pleased to squeeze shares out of the abundance of Durama Imbaba and shower blessings upon the poor and the motherless."

Durama Imbaba had a daughter, named Simera, who was married to Singra, the son of Songdu.⁸ In accordance with matrilineal custom of the age, Singra came to the house of his mother-in-law and lived with his newly-wedded wife. After some

time, Simera cooked a capon and a pig with white sides without condiments for him. Singra refused to eat them. The wife then added fermented juice of bamboo-shoots and the juice of the pumelo fruit. Then again the flour which she used in baking was underdone. Singra refused to eat again. For full seven days and full seven nights, he would neither eat nor drink. At last he said :

"This place is not congenial to me. I will not stay any longer. The water is no good. I will not drink it."

He then wound a hundred cubits of cane around his waist to starve himself. He went to his mother, Songdu, and said to her :

"Mother, I am starving. My throat is dry from want of water. Owing to the bad smell of food, I am unable to eat."

So saying, he undid the cane around his waist and fell dead at her feet.

Songdu and Singra's brother Jingra were very angry with Durama Imbama, and decided to wage war against her. They prayed to Ahning Dimjare Nore Chire,⁹ the Goddess of Rain, to let loose torrents of rain so as to flood the country and drown Durama Imbama. They begged the spirits Nagni¹⁰ and Tengaja¹¹ to break through the rocks and wash away the earth. They formed an alliance with Buga Radepa,¹² Nahnil Singsepa¹³ and Simbu Racha Kharu Nokma.¹⁴

The spirits caused rain to fall for full seven days and full seven nights. Durama Imbama was in a fix. Songdu was breaking through the rocks in places now known as Dohma Gitok, or the Cormorant Pass and Sogin Gitok or the Vulture Pass in the Durga Hills. So she prayed to Salgra, the God of Light and Heat, and Balwa Balgira, the God of the winds, saying :

"Oh Salgra, make the sun shine brightly, if thou lovest me. Oh Balwa Balgira, blow thou strongly, if thou likest me. Songdu is trying to drown me in a flood."

The sun then shone bright and the wind blew hard for full seven days and full seven nights. The water abated and Durama Imbama was saved. She is now represented by the Tura Range in Achik Asong, and Songdu by the Brahmaputra River.

—Told by Jenga Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

THE SONG OF THE DOHGRIK (JUNGLE FOWL)

Our Life is not drab in our forest-home ;
Free are we ; happy are we,
We've no lord to overlord us ;
The forest's our home, where we ever roam,
Independent and free.
We're each entirely self-supporting,
Like any other noble being.
We scratch Mother Earth for the grub we eat ;
We fret at nothing when we're hard hit.
We blame no creature, hate no other being,
With malice towards none, we earn our living,
Through all the inclemencies of wealther.
We hoard no treasure, we care only for pleasure,
We live our lives, as Nature allows us by measure.
Nor are we stained with lust, envy or greed ;
Neither abuse we Nature nor scoff at others' creed.
We are light-hearted, cheery and sprightly,
We live lightly, we love lightly.
We take things as they 're worth, not a bit more seriously,
In sunshine, rain and when winter winds blow boisterously.
We dance, we eat what we get to our fill,
We stretch our legs when we are dead and still ;
Content are we where, at death, Nature leaves us.
Never fear we, if after death, happens something serious ;
Ours is thus good-humoured cynicism,
Life's principle with a tincture of stoicism.

—Sung in original Garo by Shanon Shangma Tegitdi,
at Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.

THE LIMPET AND THE MUNTJAC

One day a barking deer or muntjac (*muntiacus sp.*) saw beneath the clear water of a stream, a limpet clinging to a rock. The muntjac contemptuously said to him :

"How is this ? It seems quite funny that you have no feet or hands. You simply cling to rocks and logs of wood under water by means of your mouth. Fie, your pace when travelling must be exceedingly tardy. You'd need six days to pass over the distance of one of my steps."

The limpet irritably replied : "You say that I have no limbs. Yes ; it is true ; but I can walk faster than you by means of my mouth. If you please, let us run a race on a set date to determine which of us is the faster."

The muntjac's wonder knew no bounds when the limpet challenged him to race. He readily agreed. Both of them fixed a day and a place from which to start the race. The limpet promised to say "chiop" as soon as it should see the muntjac ; and the latter consented to bark "hop" as soon as it should discover the limpet. So they parted.

The limpet immediately called a conclave of all his fellow-limpets and addressed them in fiery speech : "The muntjac has disdainfully remarked that we are extremely slow-paced creatures. I have already agreed to run a race with him. We have fixed streams and rills to which he will run to see me. Now, we limpets all look alike. The muntjac will not recognize me particularly. So, comrades, whenever you see the muntjac, just utter "chiop" and he will believe that I have outrun him. Send this message all round and pass it on to our brethren in every stream, rill, and rivulet."

On the appointed day the limpet and the muntjac met each other in their trysting place. The signal for the start of the race was given and away went the deer like a streak of lightning. The resourceful limpet merely sank deeper into the water and remained there smilingly. After a while when the muntjac approached a certain point in a stream, he heard the sound of "chiop" uttered by a limpet there. The deer could not believe his ears ; but he did confess that the limpet had outrun him, and he wondered exceed-

ingly how such a limbless creature could perform such a remarkable feat. Away he bolted a second time with still greater speed. He soon came to another stream, again heard the pre-arranged signal, and once more believed that the limpet had outdistanced him.

The muntjac now ran furiously up a hill to the source of a third stream. Again, he bewilderedly encountered the cry "chiop" and again he marvelled at the extraordinary speed of his handicapped opponent. Away he went once more, running his utmost, dashing recklessly across the hills and along the course of a stream, down to its very confluence with a river. Again, when he approached the water, the self-same sound, chirped by another limpet, reached his puzzled ears. The muntjac by this time was at a loss to understand how the limbless limpet succeeded every time in outrunning him. He made up his mind to make a final desperate bid for victory. When he felt sufficiently renewed in strength, he dashed tempestuously to the most distant stream he knew of. As he recklessly galloped along, he suddenly plunged over a precipice and perished.

—Told by Toran Marak Raksam
at Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

THE SONG OF THE SWINE

There's a muddy pool for me to wallow in, huk bandoa.²
There's a log of wood for me to rub my body on, huk bandoa.
I lie down full length under the house, huk bandoa.
I die pointing my snout up when I am killed for my mistress's
maternal uncle, huk bandoa.

There's a trough for me to feed in, huk bandoa.
There's water in the gutter to wash my face in, huk bandoa.
I am fattened up with delicacies undistinguishable, huk
bandoa.

Any food I eat is well digested, huk bandoa,
For my appetite is always keen and sharp, huk bandoa,
I feel hungry soon after I am fed, huk bandoa.
For possessing a healthy appetite and good digestion, huk
bandoa,

Am I called a glutton and a voracious eater, huk bandoa.
By foolish weaklings of the human race, huk bandoa ;
Who can hardly digest a handful of soft meal, huk bandoa,
Never from stomach pain do I suffer, huk bandoa,
Nor am I ever troubled by any bowel complaints, huk
bandoa,

As the philosophising human weaklings are, huk bandoa.
I walk, I run, I eat, I sleep, huk bandoa,
When to half a dozen pigs do I give birth, huk bandoa,
As if nothing unusual happened to me, huk bandoa,
While for weeks the human mothers weakly lie down, huk
bandoa,

When they give birth to a punny child, huk bandoa.
Careless for the morrow I lie down, huk bandoa,
In warm slushy mud or on soft dusty ground, huk bandoa,
While poor human beings rack their brains, huk bandoa,
Trying to fathom why in the world they live, huk bandoa,
How to live, what to do, they ever consider, huk bandoa.
I run away when I am beaten, huk bandoa.
If estranged from human beings, huk bandoa,
I do not starve but plenty of food I find, huk bandoa,

THE MONKEY AND THE TORTOISE

A common short-tailed monkey and a tortoise were once great friends. One day they started out together to set bamboo conical-shaped fishing baskets for fish. The monkey, being more clever than the tortoise, reserved all the best fishing places for himself and set his baskets in them. The tortoise, being unable to secure suitable spots, took his chances and set only a single trap and that in a small, muddy lake where wild boars were accustomed to come and wallow. The next day a large number of fish got entrapped in the monkey's baskets ; but he would not give even a small portion of them to the tortoise.

On a latter date the tortoise went to see the basket which he had set in the small muddy lake and found a big, wild pig caught in it. He speared it and it squealed loud and long. The monkey hearing the shrill squeals of the wild pig came running as fast as he could to the spot, and found the pig at the point of death. He helped the tortoise kill it, keeping himself at a safe distance from the wild pig and all along merely tapping it with the tip of a long bamboo pole.

The tortoise was about to take the body of the wild pig in a lump to his house. But the monkey said to him :

"Let us cut the body into pieces. We will take only the good portions of the flesh. We had better cook the meat here and take it home later."

The simple tortoise assented to his proposal. So they cut the meat into joints and steaks, dried and smoked them, and cooked the best pieces on the spot. Then the monkey said :

"Let us enjoy this cooked meat together on the top of a big tree on yonder hill. From there we can get a wonderful view of our motherland while we are eating."

The tortoise said that he could not climb trees ; but the monkey readily agreed. Together they carried the cooked meat to the foot of a big tree on a hill which commanded a wide view of the surrounding country. The monkey said :

"Let me first take our meat up the tree. When it is all up, I shall hoist you."

Again the poor tortoise consented and they worked together

to get the cooked meat to the top of the tall tree. When it was all there, the monkey told the tortoise to catch hold of his tail with his mouth. The tortoise did so. The monkey then assayed to carry him to the top ; but when they were half way up to the first branch, he cried out :

"Alas, my tail is becoming detached. Let free your grip or we shall both die."

The tortoise loosened his hold and fell heavily to the ground. Three times more the monkey tried to hoist the tortoise up the tree ; but each time he pretended that his tail was coming off and the simple tortoise fell to the ground with a heavy thud. At last the monkey exclaimed :

"What else can I do for you ? I've tried my best to take you up, but I find that I am unable. So you remain here at the foot of the tree and I shall toss down your share of the meat."

The tortoise stayed where he was and the monkey speedily scrambled up the tree. From there he threw down only bones from which he had already cleaned the meat. In anger the duped tortoise went down to the river and meditated revenge. There he lay in wait for his deceitful friend. In the evening the monkey finally came down to the river for a drink. As he was bending over the water, the tortoise grabbed the lower portions of his buttocks with his strong jaws. The monkey screamed in his excruciating pain and implored the tortoise to set him free ; but the later would not listen. So, wherever he went, the monkey had to bring the tortoise with him.

One day the monkey went to his maternal relation's house with the tortoise still clinging firmly to his buttocks. There a sturdy nephew of the monkey who forcibly pulled off the persistent tortoise and threw it on the ground. But the buttocks of the monkey were so severely wounded and bled so profusely that he soon died. The relations then decided to do away with the treacherous tortoise.

One male relation of the deceased monkey brought a sharp axe with which he was going to kill the tortoise. The latter looked up with diffidence in his mien and said in bold language ;

"Your axe will become blunt as soon as it touches my body."

Then another monkey brought a big bludgeon with which to beat the tortoise to death. The tortoise sneered :

"Your bludgeon will snap in two as soon as it touches my shell."

The monkeys next decided to throw him into the fire ; but the tortoise suavely said :

"Fire is extinguished as soon as it touches my body."

Finally, the monkeys said that they would get rid of him by drowning him in a deep pool of water in the river. At this the tortoise feigned great terror. He began to weep loudly and frantically prayed the monkeys to spare him from such a fate. But the revengeful monkeys would not listen to his pleas. They threw him angrily into the river to drown him. The tortoise was happy to be now free and in his natural home. The monkeys then went away in great joy, sincerely believing that their hateful enemy had perished miserably.

—Told by Delong Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Dalbotgiri, District Garo Hills.

SOME GEMS FROM ACHIK LORE ; BELIEFS

If, on starting from your home, any of your right toes, (or, if shod, your right leg) strikes something, it is a bad omen. It betokens failure, trouble or a painful accident.

If any of your left toes (or if shod, your left leg) strikes something when you start from your home, it is a good omen. It forebodes success, good results, happiness.

If any of your right toes (or, if shod, your right leg) strikes something while you are on your way home, it is a good omen. It means happy news waiting for you at home, your family's good health, success in some undertaking, general good or smooth affairs at home.

If any of your left toes (or, if shod, your left leg) hits against something, while you are returning home from a journey, it is a bad omen. It signifies, serious illness or death of any member of your family or any of your closest relations, or of one of your best friends, or general unfavourable conditions, or ill-news waiting for you at home.

If, on a journey somewhere from your home for some purpose, a muntjac or a snake crosses your pathway from the left side, it is a bad omen. It betokens failure, fruitlessness in your undertakings or ultimate trouble; if you have got a court case, it will be dismissed or compounded.

If a snake crosses your pathway from the right side, when you go from home for some definite purpose, it means that some one will stand against you in what you intend to do and you will fail. If you can kill the snake, which thus crosses your way, you will surmount the difficulties presented against you by some person or persons.

If two muntjacs or two snakes suddenly dart across your way from your left side, while you are going from home or returning thereto for some definite purpose, it shows you will be enabled to attempt twice for the same great gain, but ultimately you will fail.

If a goat or a person sneezes violently when you verbally propose to do something, or go somewhere for some definite purpose, it is bad omen. It means failure or trouble.

If you come across some long-tailed brown langur monkeys on one side or other of your pathway through a forest, infested with wild elephants, proceed on, none of the elephants will appear before you or cross your path.

If a dohsurae (a kind of small speckled thrush) or a flock of white-crested pigeons chatters on your left side, while you are returning home from a journey, it is a bad omen. It signifies death or serious illness at home or death or serious illness of some one of your near relations or friends, or some accident.

If either varieties of the birds do so on your right side, as you return home, it is a good omen. It means happiness, success, or happy news waiting for you at home.

If a muntjac or barking deer barks on your right hand side as you start on a journey, it means that you will not get the thing for which you make the journey but that your journey will be a smooth and pleasant one.

If your right eyebrow or your right shoulder twitches intermittently for a considerable length of time, some one of your closest relations are either dead or seriously ill. If the twitches occur on the left, some one of your bosom friends or one of your most trustworthy or helpful friends is either seriously ill or dead.

If a dohsurae chatters near your dwelling, while you are at home, it means some one of your closest relations is either dead or seriously ill or some tragic accident has happened to one of your near relations or friends or some one is killed by a tiger or by an elephant not far from your place of residence.

If the crows build their nests on the branches of low trees, an unusually strong gale or a cyclone is to be expected in the course of the year.

If, in the Spring, a wagtail sings on the ground in sunshine, expect immediate downfall of rain.

If during heavy rains, you dream of tigers, it means that sunshine is coming without the least possible delay.

If you dream of a river in high flood it means a litigation of case in which you will take part.

If you dream of fording across a swollen river to the other side, it means success in a lawsuit or an undertaking.

If you dream of catching fishes with your own hands, it means money which you will acquire and put into your coffers.

If you dream of fishing by means of net or hook, it forbodes difficulties but ultimate pecuniary gain.

If you dream of fire burning furiously, it foretells of a vexatious lawsuit against you, or misfortune, or loss of property.

If you dream of short-tailed common brown monkeys, it means that some mischievous persons or treacherous enemies are about you.

If you dream of yourself being chased by a wild elephant or a number of them it means that you have intruded upon the habitat of the god Baka Gonda Abet Rora and may suffer from fever.

If you dream of a big stone or a paddy-pounding mortar rolling over you, beware, you are in danger of being killed by a wild elephant.

If you dream of yourself wearing red clothes, you are in danger of being killed by a tiger.

If you dream of yourself cutting down trees, big or small, it signifies serious illness or death of one of your parents or protecting guardian.

If you dream of bathing, it betokens serious illness or trouble or anxiety.

If you dream of some one whom you know lying dead, it means that the person has eaten too much rice.

If you dream of the death of a stranger or a cow brought or presented to you, go hunting, for you will not fail to bag a deer.

Wearing a black-coat or clothes in a dream is a symbol of prolonged illness, domestic troubles or disgrace.

If you dream that you are flying, it signifies fame, overcoming your enemies, reputation, or good comments or praise of you by others.

If you dream of some one of your acquaintances using fire-arms against you, beware, that person is a traitor or your unscrupulous enemy.

If you kill a deer or wild boar alone in a jungle or somewhere with no one to help you to carry it home, pick up any dried leaf from the ground and a clod of earth; put the leaf on the carcass first and place the clod of earth over the dried leaf and leave it; no tiger will touch the carcass or carry it away during your absence.

While at home or abroad, do not scold or abuse with filthy language tigers, elephants or any other dangerous wild beasts nor call them bad names, with or without reasons ; they have the power to hear and understand your scoldings or abuses. They will try to wreak vengeance on you.

Do not stir up the ashes of the dead. If you do, their spirits will do some harm to you sooner or later.

Do not steal. If you do, you'll have to repay the owner or his descendants or relations the full value of the stolen property in your rebirths as a man or a beast of burdens.

Do not commit adultery. If you do, you soil the sacred stream of life that has been issuing for thousands of years from your manifold great forefathers and fore-mothers.

Do not swear falsely. If you do, the gods hear it, and they take stock of you, and in due course of time, you will doubtlessly have to bear the brunt of their chastisement.

Never curse the good, the honest, the noble and the brave. If you do, your curses will recoil on you, with all evil results falling upon you.

Do not insult the poor and the unfortunate. Misi Susime, who made thee rich and fortunate, hears thee ; she knows how to chastise thee.

Remain good and perfectly honest, if for trial, at least, for seven years, without telling a single lie to anybody, even to beasts or inanimate objects ; be perfectly true to your inner being. Then your words will become impregnated with power for good or evil. Any curse you casually or intentionally utter against any human being or beast will then become fruitful of effects.

Live with a mind at peace, bearing good and kindly thoughts to all beings, and, holding to the thought that you are one with Tattara Rabuga Janggini Nokgipa Jamani Biambi. Then no power or being can do harm to you.

Do not insult or give bad names to the gods and goddesses for bad weather, calamity or misfortune ; for you do not know the business of gods and goddesses in their universal and all-comprehensive scheme of things.

Do not conspire in words or thought or action against Misi Saljong, Salgra or Misi Susime or other gods and goddesses of

earth and heavens ; for we are just like tiny ephemeral insects before them and they live forever.

There is a time when even the stalks of millet and rice seem to rise against you and a person seems to be Misi Saljong to you.

Do not intentionally or deliberately speak ill or contemptuously of any of your fellow beings ; nor wilfully injure or offend anybody ; for a living person has such a powerful human principle within him or her as, if he or she willed, to crush you out of existence, no matter how powerful, rich or highly placed you may be. Sometimes stronger powers of heaven and earth come to the aid of injured persons against their offenders. You are a frail being, howbeit, and you die when even a small orange thorn pricks your temple.

The differences between the world of the tiger and yours is as great as the differences between an elephant and a louse.

It is good for a tiger to spring upon a helpless goat and eat it up ; but for the goat to be thus eaten up, O what a difference.

Do not be hasty to perform the Gana ceremony; for if you are not destined from your birth to perform it, you'll die outright or some grave catastrophe will overtake your wife or children.

Do not be selfish with your food or drink at your house. If you become so, Misi Susime looks down on you with contempt and disgust.

Do not send away any guest or stranger empty-stomached, when he or she comes to your house for food or shelter. Misi Susime has placed the good things of the world in your hands also for the guests or strangers. How much food or drink does your single stomach demand of you? Misi Susime knows well. Let the guests or strangers, who go out from your house, do so with heartfelt benedictions on their lips.

As you live you may fill up all your coffers with much money, jewels and precious gems, fill up your granaries with paddy, millet and corns and have the pleasure of seeing them ; but Dingipa Bahbra² has not bestowed upon you enough stomach to contain them nor power to digest them.

Your father has planted a jack-tree near his house ; it has grown to be a beautiful tree. Will you hang yourself on it, because your beloved father has planted it ?

Your wealth lies in your arms and your paddy, millet and

corns wait for you near the *wahnok* bamboos (*Bambusa teres*), that is, your bounteous industry alone enhances rich harvest.

There are some things in the world which you cannot cleanse by washing in water or dry them in the sun.

There comes a time when even a tiny ant becomes a burden to you.

A stripling hardwood tree bends down, when even a sparrow sits on it; but, when it attains unto maturity, do we not use it as the main prop for a house?

A man points his fingers to the sun and bends his waist to the earth.

Don't you know how to earn your living? Go and scratch the earth just as the jungle-fowls do. Do men feed them?

It rains heavily and the grass has overgrown the pathway, still a man goes on with what he intends to accomplish, drinking rain-water, and, carrying jungle-lice on his ears as if they were ear-drops.

He has the face of a tiger, when you look at him, and appears as a bearded goat, when he has passed.

He is an elephant, when seen from a distance and like a banyan tree, when he is at his village.

Your wife and children are your enemies; but your mother is the root of your life.

If the female iguana swallows her own babies and the hen sips her own eggs, what cannot a heartless human mother do?

If you beat me on my back, I feel pain also on the other side.

When the hens are all carried away by civet-cats, the lazy man goes and mends the hencoop.

When the house has already been burnt down, the foolish man goes to the stream and brings water in large pitchers.

When the cow has been killed by a tiger, the careless man goes and shuts up the door of the cow-shed.

A crab-shell was put up in a *jhum* field for a *cadjan* by Abet, who did not know how to build one. It is an example of useless work by a useless man.

He is such an idle man that he has formed a lasting friendship with his bed, on which he sleeps and sticks to it with leech-like tenacity.

He is so careful of his finery that not a grain of dust adheres to his horns nor a burr sticks to his tail.

It is like the rebuff of a bent bamboo or like the running amuck of a mad dog.

This rice is such that it is mixed with grains of dust hardly fit to eat, and tastes sour when brewed into beer.

Just as a piece of iron is used, having steel incorporated in it, so is ferment-powder used by more rice-flour added to it.

Your mother first asks you about your stomach, whether it is filled or not; but your wife first ransacks your basket looking for what articles you've brought her.

He stretches his neck out for other people's food and drink, just as a peacock does, but, when the time comes for him to spare his food and drink for others, he draws his neck in just as a turtle does.

A man is an exacting imperialist towards his own mother, but an obsequious servant to his own wife.

A man of sorrows appears like a half-burnt tree-stump or like a wandering raven.

If you stumble against something hard, your legs receive injuries; and, if you stare up at the heights, some tiny particles fall into your eyes and irritate them.

He is a goat and a basket of cotton to himself.

Do not boast of your long life on earth. A period of time which we call a hundred years, is as nothing, not even like one of the smallest fractions of your breath, when compared with measureless eternity.

Who can tell me how long Manè Philtè, Mother Earth, remained without her present shape, and how long will she continue to exist in her present state and shape?

Do not try to deceive tigers, elephants, boars and bears, pretending that you are a brave man. They can discern the real born brave man at sight. An assumed brave man, trusting in his weapons in his hands, is as light as a feather before their eyes.

The weed resuscitates at its nodes and the wild luffa creeps over the roofs of an abandoned house.

A bad blacksmith blames the bursting charcoal in his smithy.

A valuable plant has to be manured, fenced round, protected by raised earth-work and watered. How much more a child requires to be tended and nursed in like manner.

A lord reduced to the state of a servant is as contentious,

touchy and prickly as the scorching sun during the rainy season.

A brawling woman and a goose in a house can together create such a resounding din as to drive a sane husband mad.

Although the *bhimraz* bird is as jet black as the darkest night, all other birds respect and obey him for his sterling qualities of heart and head.

Your matrilineal relations as a whole are as a clump of phool-grass on slippery ground to aid you secure your foothold ; or as a long pole of the *wahge* bamboo (*Bambusa Tulda*) whereby to fathom the depth of a pool of water.

Riches are bestowed on the industrious and the thrifty by Tengthe Bandok Mikphil Jahphil,⁴ who takes them back, if the owners prove themselves unworthy of their possessions.

When alone in a forest, do not show off to frighten away tigers and other dangerous wild beasts. Is the civet-cat afraid of the hen because of her cackling ?

Do not think that only the conclusion you have arrived at as a result of racking your brains is true. If the conclusion is about the habits of mice and rats, the cat knows better than you do.

The living trees and grass are green,
When they dry, grey they're seen ;
Green is the colour of life pure,
Grey symbolizes death that's sure.

He is as green as a newly-shot bamboo that's
hardly leafed,

A mere child in labyrinthine affairs worldly.

A child at first for play picks up a glowing firebrand,
But drops it with a yelp, when he discovers it burns
his hand.

From village to village on goes a traveller,
Unmindful of barking dogs at each village,
Till he reaches his destination, however far,
To which he started on his long pilgrimage.

Insult not your superiors in age and experience,
Though in more advantageous position are you placed ;
They have made the world a bit better,
Do your part in it, if you can, with greater efficiency.

They fired out hornets, drove away wild beasts you feared,
Hewed down gigantic trees, the jungles first cleared ;
Chose the site for the village of your habitation,
First smoothed down the forest for *jhum* cultivation.

Our great forefathers still live in us.

A member of a low clan that was once enslaved,
Now, a country Lasker, by chance elevated,
He thinks himself a demi-god fit to ascend the skies,
Flogs a descendant of the man who once subjected
his clan.

Such is the nauseous conduct of a degraded Achik slave,
When he finds himself free, dressed in trifle authority.

—*Collected by the Author from different
sources in Garo Hills.*

THE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

According to the belief of the Achiks, there are supernatural beings, possessing immense powers for doing good or evil. They move to and fro between the earth and the heaven. Some of them are purely celestial beings, while others are partly terrestrial and partly celestial. Most of them can hear and answer prayers and exercise providential care over mankind. They are immortal. They can control the forces of the elements and direct the courses of worldly events.

In the Epic Songs of the Achiks, Dikki the Great alone is portrayed as most successfully befriending all the supernatural beings in the universe and as maintaining the most intimate intercourse and alliance with them in furthering his sacred tasks for all mankind.

By severe *tapas* (austerities), by long deep devotions (or *sadhons*), by unflaggable concentration of mind, and by sustained meditation on these supernatural beings, a person can succeed in bringing some of them down to him and making them do his bidding in this life. These celestial supernatural beings also can make themselves at will visible or invisible to mankind. They can perform wonderful things, good or bad, for men, if they will, while they themselves remain invisible to human eyes or assume the shapes of human beings or animals, such as black cats, bears, huluk apes or langur monkeys. They can whisper secret messages into the ears of human beings in their real shapes, if they so desire.

The following are the chief supernatural beings according to Achik belief :

Katchi, Indik, Ahning, Sonatchi, Giting,
Gaanti, Bismit, Jingjo, Chimmit, Khasindik, Ime,
Nome, Nambokbori, Dedeori, Immit, Imchang, Jingjore,
Chapchore, Nore, Nunuo, Gune, Jinne, Ahningsime,
Satre, Chining Noe Dingshe, Juge Balje.

The Achiks believe also in the existence of fairies, brownies, pixies, gnomes or spirits of the earth, of undines or spirits of

water, of salamanders or spirits of fire, of sylphs or spirits of the air, and of the naiads and dryads of the woods.

The old and elder members of the Achiks never hesitate to assert that these supernatural beings are actual realities ; that they are making the great pilgrimage of life side by side with human beings ; that their forms are of such material which is self-luminous and that they are normally invisible to us as the matter of which their bodies are formed is more subtle than that which forms human beings and as its vibrations are beyond the visible spectrum.

The old and crude Achik priests, who are now very rare, teach us that, if we, who possess a spiritual life, especially develop a faculty and thus create suitable and proper conditions for them, these supernatural beings will surely respond and hold communion with us ; and that the nature spirits, as our fellow citizens on earth, are our invisible friends, if we only know how to cultivate friendship with them.

—Told by Sonaram R. Shangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

GOERA, THE GOD OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

Long, long ago when the earth was young, and all animate and inanimate beings were still in process of assuming their respective temporary and permanent shapes, animals could talk with men and gods. At that time, a batch of the forefathers of the Achiks came to the country of Ohom from the far-off land of Ahsong Nonoe² which was located near the mountains of Ahphiljangsha³ by the waters of the Nengkhuchot⁴ in Ahsong Tibotgiri.⁵ At length they settled permanently in Bindenggu, Rongchingkhol and Tak kru Malika in the vicinity of the Balphakram Hill⁶ in Achik Asong.⁷

In this period the Songdu River⁸ was a small streamlet no larger than a gutter; the buffalo was no bigger than a chicken; the implements of husbandry were dross-alloyed; steel was unknown; clothes were of the coarsest kind; and no better salt than a mixture of grit and dust was available in the markets. But the people of those times were of gigantic stature. They often reached twenty-five or thirty cubits in height and their chests measured six or seven cubits in breadth.

In this age, too, there was free intercourse between gods and goddesses of the upper regions and human beings of the lower. The divinities often formed deep friendships and contracted marriage with mankind. Both heaven and earth met and adored each other. The result of all this was that people were than more demi-gods than men proper. According to their respective virtues and vices, some of them had been destined to live and die like ordinary mortals; while others attained to eternal glory and immortality.

So, the aforementioned settlers formed a community of demi-gods. They led happy, peaceful and carefree lives. For justice they appealed to mere physical force, regarding only the right of the strongest and believing that their success in physical contests justified their cause, not the righteousness of their cause. In short, might was right, and strength ruled supreme. The settlers cultivated the soil and bartered and exchanged commodities among themselves and with the mysterious people of the

East. Their market place was called Gore Bri Ora Ahding Dìpblokni Guare.

Among this community of demi-gods was a man named Misi Ahrakpa Saljong Gingmatpa,¹⁰ who was one of the strongest beings of that age. He had a daughter named Kabu Renche Norimbi Dikkimbi,¹¹ who was the most beautiful and most energetic woman of the time. Matrilineally she belonged to Rongbang *mahari* (clan). She was married to Dumerong Ducherong Ahning Gring Wana Chining Gring Waja¹² with all the dignity and solemnity customary to that age. He, however, died suddenly of an emaciating illness with which he was attacked while clearing jungle for jhum cultivation at a place known as Misini Jakrimra Saljongni Redokra.¹³ The God Misi Saljong had slain him with his yellow rod of malady for clearing the virgin forest at the place to which he was wont to frequent.

After the premature death of her husband Kabu Renche was seduced by her maternal uncle named Misi Chipimpa Ahning Jogo Racha Chining Sambal Gitel.¹⁴ She was renamed Nodoe Notakki Balonegre Balongjap¹⁵ by him. In thus marrying his own niece, the uncle had committed the sin of incest which was the greatest social sin (or *marang*) of the time according to the Achik social code.

Now, the circumstances under which Goera was born were peculiarly strange. The period of gestation lasted for full seven summers and full seven winters. During the time of his conception Bisikkrom Bidhatore,¹⁶ the Supreme Divine Mother, foretold Wana Wangga Dudu Chompa Aropa Bindopa, the patriarchal head of the tiger family, that the child after birth would grow up to be the strongest being in the world. So the prophecy excited him to extreme jealousy. He wanted to kill Nodoe Notakki immediately; but Bisikkrom Bidhatore dissuaded him from carrying out his murderous scheme and asked him simply to dog her steps and measure his strength with the child when he should grow up to be a man. So, Wana Wangga began to shadow the mother of Goera, during which time he once devoured Chelshe Mechik, one of her maid-servants.

When full seven summers and full seven winters had elapsed, Nodoe Notakki was in travail for full seven days and seven nights. In the meantime, the child used to declare from within the womb that it should be known by no other name than that

of Goera. The relations of Nodoe Notakki were panic-stricken at this unusual occurrence. They devoutly invoked the aid of Saljong, the tutelary god of the firmament and of fertility, to save the lives of both the mother and child. They vowed that they would sacrifice a giant black he-goat in his honour, if their prayer should be heard. Then they boiled water in seven huge earthen pots to bathe the baby when born. At the early dawn of the eighth day the long expected child came into the light of day, crying aloud in a clear defined voice : "Goera, the Invincible." At his birth Rome Roshe¹⁷ and Chuse Dangse,¹⁸ the favourite maid-servants of Bahbra, the Goddess Mother, acted as mid-wives.

The extensive area of land wherein Goera was born and which belonged to Nodoe Notakki by right of the matriarchal usage of that age, was called Ahsong Ahbugrang Chiganshel-grang Ahtutru Chamegar Misini Nokgitcham Saljongui Kihgongdam.¹⁹ The locality in front of the house of his birth was known as Bindeng Salaram,²⁰ the place behind it, as Shohlyng Rangitdu²¹ and the space under it, as Mao Gypeng Rongma Khueng.²²

Now, Wana Wangga went about in concealment beside the mother of Goera as the time of the child's birth approached. So, no sooner had Goera come out into the light of the world than Wana Wangga sprang upon the babe in order to devour him outright. But Goera, even as an infant, nimbly jumped out of his reach and escaped from his clutches.

Goera was born full-teethed. As a babe he was extraordinarily clever, intelligent and handsome. His body was a paragon of health and strength. His ruddy form radiated activity and power. He never wept or cried. Not a single tear ever dropped from his eyes.

At daybreak on the morning of his birth, Nodoe Notakki went to a nearby sparkling stream to bathe. She left the infant alone in the house sleeping on the floor curtained all round by blue silk and golden muslin cloth. As soon as her back was turned Goera got up and made his way to the Nokphanthe,²³ the Bachelors' House, in the village. A number of long massive tomtoms hung on hooks of granite stone in the main room of the dwelling. Goera began to beat the drums frenzidly and

danced a sprightly martial dance, crying out repeatedly in exultant modulation :

"Goera... Goera... Goera... Goera... Goera... Goera."

Nodoe Notakki apprehended that some one was playing pranks on her new-born child ; so she hurried back from the stream. Great was her surprise when she found her own babe alone dancing vigorously, beating the tomtoms madly, and shouting out hilariously his own name. As he caught sight of his mother, the child obediently came running to her. She gave him suck, lulled him to sleep, placed him on the floor, and went away. But the unnatural child merely feigned sleep. For, no sooner had his mother departed a second time, than the adroit youngster leaped up, wandered about the village and its surroundings, and made himself acquainted with the topography of the place. Still he managed to return to the house, lay on the floor, and pretend to be asleep at the exact moment his mother came back. When he awoke, she fondled him lovingly. The precocious child danced on her lap in the most martial manner, exultantly shouting out :

"Goera... Goera... Goera... Goera... Goera... Goera."

Nodoe Notakki kept silent about the strange ways of her babe. She pondered his actions deeply in her heart and sincerely wondered what sort of a being he would grow up to be.

II

After the birth of Goera, Nodoe Notakki and her husband moved to Chikhasindik Chimerongdik Maadini Bisik Sepruni Rongdik.¹ There they settled down and a grand purification ceremony, known as *horypa*, was performed upon the mother. Goera's maternal uncles all took active parts in this imposing ceremony. They were respectively called Rokman Meha,² Chengman Phante,³ Athik Sintink, Dina Okpet, Didi Rangpet, Abkhuabel Arabelbel and Ahning Doe Nagarak Chining Doe Nagaja.⁴

Now it must not be supposed that Goera was the sole child of Nodoe Notakki. Not at all. Before his birth his eldest sister, Sikmeja Dolmeja, had been abducted by Seh-elja Wachingja, the patriarchal head of the wolf family. Another sister, named Anameja Ginameja was carried off by Achakja Matija Weenggil Wachenggil Tonggro Manggisim, the patriarchal head

of the canine family; awhile a third sister, named Mejakchi Khasindik, was decoyed by Bugararaja, the patriarchal head of the mermen. All these abductions had taken place for purposes of marriage. Another elder sister of Goera was called Nahsekja Nahbalja. His immediate elder sister, Nireja Sanjeja, was already betrothed to Wana Wangga. At this time Goera had two younger sisters, called Duro Changro and Nee Noto.

Now, one day, Goera's maternal uncles, Rokman Meha and Chengman Phante started off for the Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding⁵ market in order to purchase a giant black he-goat which had been promised to Saljong before Goera's birth. On the way, at Ranggawak Rangshaljong to be exact, both of them were suddenly swallowed up by the seven headed monster-boar, named Wakmangganchi Aragondi.

This monster-boar was then the biggest and mightiest being in the whole world. Its body was as big as a mountain. It possessed seven terrible-looking heads, furcated from one main neck; each head having seven sharp projecting tusks, which looked like two-edged scimitars. The beast had one piercing eye in the centre of each forehead shining as bright and luminous as a full moon. On its back grew seven clumps of *jati* bamboos, seven plots of thatch grass and seven stalks of bulrush plants. Seven perennial streamlets also flowed there. Together these formed a little forest world on the back of the enormous creature whereon dwelt a pair of langur monkeys with their offsprings as well as seven pairs of moles. When the gigantic creature stood up, its proboscis touched the Dura Hill⁶ while its tail lay submerged in the waters of the Songdu River. The sight of it in that posture was very terrible and awe-inspiring.

People trembled with fear at the mere mention of the monster-boar which roamed where it would without interference, as if it were the sole master of the whole world. It devoured every living thing that crossed its path; wantonly destroyed crops in the fields; and devastated whole countrysides. Rice, pumpkins, gourds, melons and yams formed its favourite repast.

Now let us see how this monster-boar came to the terrestrial surface of the earth. Long before the birth of Goera, his maternal uncles, namely, Dina Okpet, Didi Rangpet and Ahkhabel Arabelbel, brought up this monster-boar, when it

was but a wee pig, from the seventh underground level of the subterranean region at the time of the culmination of the universal conflict between the denizens of the subterranean region and the dwellers of the terrestrial surface. During the hostilities, a hero, named Khorengpa Khobinpa Ganggipok Chidual,⁷ a warrior of the upper regions, captured Chongmitchang Pentdrang Chipuchi Rodachi,⁸ who was one of the warriors on the side of the subterranean combatants. A man, named Gonga Tritpa Rakshanpa,⁹ was fishing by means of his hooks and nets in a stream known as Dijangbra Dilsing Bima, when the captor dragged up his victim past him to the terrestrial surface. As the captive brushed by, Gonga inadvertently stepped on it and retarded its motion. Thereupon, the captor let loose the victim in a panic. Gonga picked it up, rolled it in a leaf of *rehkoksi* herb, and took it home with the intention of offering it as a sacrifice to the gods. Just then, Susime,¹⁰ the god of Fortune, passed by and said to him :

"Set this poor captive free. The subterranean world will be rendered poorer by his death. The fowls that are kept confined in the coop of Munepa Takko Sahnepa Mallo¹¹ will answer your purpose better.

Presently the fellow-countrymen of the captive, following his trail, came in search of him from the subterranean world. This search party consisted of Incha Rengshin, Gingbo Sallo, Khahchiboting, Alik Balmin, Bikbodil Nachibokkhal, Matram Takkil and Khuhsim Sawil. They implored Gonga to hand over the captive to them. Gonga did as they desired. Then, followed by his dog, Irijahthongrak, and by his contemporaries, known as Dina Okpet, Didi Rangpet and Ahkhuabal Arabelbel, he went along with the search party down to the subterranean region. On his return he stole Doha Ahning Ruram Sureng,¹² the progenitor of fowls and birds, and its offspring from the cave of Munepa Tekko Sahnepa Mallo and brought them up with him in seven huge cages. It was at this time that Dina Okpet, Didi Rangpet and Ahkhuabel Arabelbel brought up a wee pig, known as Wakmabitchi Warak Wakkimbi.¹³

This pig was reared and fed in a sty of strong rocks. In the course of time it had so outgrown its dwelling that Rokman Meh-a and Chengman Phanthe had to demolish it and set the captive free. Then it began to grow so huge and terrible that

no one dared recapture it; and everyone let it roam at will. People fed it with husks and sundry titbits at times; but from a safe distance. On one occasion when Dina Okpet, Didi Rangpet and Ahkhuabel Arabelbel were feeding it with husks, it knocked them into a feeding trough and ate them alive along with its foods. From that time no one ventured even to feed the ferocious beast.

The wild boar grew larger and larger and moved about wildly, cared for and claimed by none. It was then that it came to be known as Wakmangganchi Aragondi. It had reached its full size as a pure wild beast of unparalleled bulk and strength at the time it swallowed up Nokman Meh-a and Chengman phante when they were on their way to the market.

The news of the tragic end that overtook the maternal uncles of Goera reached their native village at the end of full seven summers and full seven winters. The people were horror-stricken at this terrible news; but, as they all feared the monster-boar, they did not even dare to mention the sudden tragedy.

III

Goera was weaned at the age of full four summers and full four winters. He grew to be a strong and robust boy, radiating, as in his infancy, the best health and strength. There was determination and firmness in his look. Everybody was struck with wonder and admiration at his fine facial features, the absolute symmetry of his body, and his bold and upright mien. His hair was as black as a raven. Anyone who beheld the sturdy lad was attracted at once by his extraordinary grandeur and deportment.

In his youth, like a good many high-spirited youngsters in all countries and all ages, he thought more of mischief than of anything else. He was active, passionate, keen, fleet and absolutely fearless. He used to laugh at the most imminent and most terrible dangers. Living by himself appealed to him more than anything else. No one was able to exercise any sort of influence, either for good or evil, upon him. He would on no account allow himself to be overruled in anything even by his parents and immediate relations.

As a youngster, Goera was a veritable fire-brand towards

boys and girls of his age. He used to tease and beat them for mere sport. Wherever there was vociferous crying and weeping among children, it was imputable to the presence of Goera among them. He would neither play peacefully with his companions at the seeds of *gila* (*entada scandens*), nor run races gleefully with them on the sands of the Songdu River. Instead, he would forcibly take away all the pebbles, the *gila* seeds and the bamboo tubes which they had collected to play with. He used to wantonly break the small weirs which they built across streamlets for catching fish and demolish the sand houses they had diligently constructed in play. He would even snatch away the bamboo stilts from other boys. In fine, he was the very embodiment of mischief and a source of great annoyance to all the boys and girls of his age with whom he came in contact. Consequently he had few friends. His companions nicknamed him Tompa Okpet Dina Khahpet,¹ the selfwilled, heartless, mischief-monger.

In later youth Goera was proficient to excellence in all kinds of games requiring alertness, physical strength and dexterity. He was passionately fond of chasing dangerous wild beasts and of killing them with his strong bare hands. Never did he miss an opportunity of pursuing, encountering and killing all sorts of beasts of prey when the occasion presented itself. Never was he happier than when he was bringing home the head of some wild beast which he had daringly assaulted. Because of Goera's utter disregard for his own life in any danger, all knowledge of the monster-boar was hitherto scrupulously withheld from him.

One day a number of grown-up boys of the village were playing *gila* seeds. Goera approaching the boisterous youngsters asked to be allowed to join the game. The boys flatly refused to accept him, saying that as he never lost in any game, he would only spoil their own sport. At this, Goera forcibly took away all the *gila* seeds and hurled them far into the jungle. Many of the boys ran home; for, as Goera possessed unparalleled physical strength, no one ever dared to raise a finger against him. However, on this occasion, some of the bolder boys lingered awhile and ventured to remonstrate with him, saying :

"You shamelessly display your great strength against the

weak and the defenseless. If you are truly so brave, if you garb yourself in the clothes of a man, why is it that you dare not fight against Wakmangganchi Aragondi, who has already devoured several of your own kith and kin?"

This retort was a revelation to Goera. His interest in the monster-boar of whose existence he had never before known was thoroughly aroused. He wished to try his great strength against it in combat. With a view to ascertaining the real character and nature of the beast of which he now heard for the first time, he rushed home to his grandmother to gather all the particulars he could about the ferocious monster-boar.

Goera's grandmother was full seven times seven score summers old. Her real full name was Sume Dilme Sheksho Mahbitchi Doro Dohkandi Okgitduma Bolkaruma;² but she was generally nicknamed Noonggi Noongjap Illinggi Illingap.³ She wore as her *gana* or petticoats seven enormous thick cotton blankets; but they scarcely reached down to her knee.

Goera suddenly approached his aged grandmother and inquired of her all about Wakmangganchi Aragondi. His query gave her a start. She promptly poured down sinister imprecations upon the persons, whoever they might be, who had insinuated the existence of the monster-boar to such a headstrong youth as her grandson. Stubbornly, she refused to give the inquisitive Goera the least bit of information concerning the terrible beast. The youth insisted that he be told all about it; that nothing known about the boar be hidden from him. The old lady would not yield an inch in her purpose. Finally, becoming enraged at her prolonged obduracy, Goera went out and brought in Songduni Angkorong Sagalni Damohong, a giant sea-crab. This creature was a hideous loathsome-looking being. It had projecting eyes that seemed to be constantly glaring, long, flexible feelers and gigantic claws with which it used to nip its victims to shreds. Goera threatened his grandmother, saying that he would let the frightening sea-crab pinch her private parts unmercifully, if she continued any longer to deny him full knowledge of Wakmangganchi Aragondi. So, finally, with the greatest reluctance, the aged grandmother yielded and told her fearless grandson all she knew about the monster-boar.

When Goera had reached the age of full thirty summers and full thirty winters, he had grown to be deep and serious in his

manners. His spirit was inflamed with an insatiable desire to avenge the death of his maternal uncles. He, too, yearned to earn undying glory and an immortal name by killing Wakmang-ganchi Aragondi, whose proud existence had been casting a pall of fear and gloom over the lives and thoughts of all beings. In the days of yore, the highest glory was bestowed upon those who were brave and strong enough to kill the most dangerous wild beasts.

Goera now set out towards the East to the markets of Susime and Salgra, the Sun-God, in quest of Steel and Dolomite. He passed through twelve markets in one day, visiting in his journey the markets of Makkapa and Doh-otdu.⁵ On the way he made friends with two strong and wise men, who were respectively named Gringjeng and Abaljeng.⁶ These two supernatural beings had been living in constant communion with the invisible superior beings above. From them, therefore, Goera learned much as to his future, and, especially that in all deeds of fame and glory, he should first make friends with the gods.

The two new companions of Goera accompanied him to Rangbildi Rangbilda,⁷ where an earthly being known as Rema Gongga, but nicknamed Toajeng Abilpeng, volunteered to become the personal servant of Goera. He was a tall, stalwart and worldly-wise being. Before his meeting with Goera he had been roaming about the world as a happy-go-lucky fellow, carrying always with him a formidable axe. He was always dressed in purple silk, grey shawl on his shoulders, and a red pagree on his head. Goera accepted his service and became not only an excellent attendant to the brave young hero, but also one of his staunchest followers.

Toajeng Abilpeng led Goera to Ahning Gring Wana Chining Gring Wacha⁸ in the country of Ahsong Nongrengreng Chiga Nongchibing.⁹ This was the birth place of Steel and Dolomite in the subterranean region. The mother of Steel was called Roejing Jorimchi and her husband was named Duh-a-Raja Jingi Nokma. The mother of Dolomite was Roejing Ronggisim. From them Goera secured bars of steel and dolomite.

Goera and Toajeng Abilpeng proceeded to the habitat of Dykgyl Khongshyl Mehgam Rugipa Mande Dakgipa, the prince of founders of metals and rocks, whose workshop was at

Mehgam Nongshobal Dykgyl Shalbri.¹⁰ His wife was called Ae Mechik Aje Tira and she was the daughter of Kamal Aepa Mande Ajepa. She was a deft compounder of all sorts of herbal drugs. Dykgyl Khongshyl's bellows-fanner was named Mehgam Simareng.

IV

While Goera and Toajeng Abiljeng were on their way to the workshop of Dykgyl Khongshyl, Matchru Tori Matcha Khalsi, the patriarchal head of the civet-cats made his way to the workshop of Kamal Aepa Mande Ajepa,¹ the maker of armour for the warrior gods, in order to see for himself what sort of armour the well-known worker was accustomed to fashion for the divinities. As he sat in the workshop satisfying his curiosity, Matchru Tori suddenly belched. The smell of his breath was very sweet due to his having recently partaken of the fruit of the *tehcrot* vine.² Matchru Tori's sudden belching, instead of annoying the busy armourer, on the contrary delighted him very much and he said :

"Matchru Tori, if you will continue to belch like that in my presence as long as the *tehcrot* fruit is available, I will manufacture a big, bright *milam* (two-edged sword) for you, which, when brandished, will flash light over the whole world."

Matchru Tori readily agreed to do this. Every day during the season of the *tehcrot* fruit, he belched sweetly before the delighted workman. When the season was over, the armourer of the gods who had a stern respect for the sanctity of the pledged word, gave into Matchru Tori's keeping a big, bright, beautiful *milam*. It was so heavy that the recipient was unable to lift it up in his hands ; so he had to drag it along to his home.

By and by Krek Meh-a Amak Wachek, the patriarchal head of the common brown short-tailed monkeys, known as Makkras, met Matchru Tori and asked :

"Where did you get that big, broad *milam*, my friend ?"

"Kamal Aepa Mande Ajepa gave it to me because of the smell of my belches."

"Do you mean to say that the armourer was so kind and good as to give you such an excellent sword for mere belches ?" asked the incredulous monkey.

"Yes," replied Matchru Tori, "he was so kind and good to me. As I said, he gave me the *milam* solely on account of the belches I made at his workshop."

Krek Meh-a desired greatly to possess a similar sword; so he decided to make the same experiment at the workhouse of Kamal Aepa Mande Ajepa. For his breakfast he had consumed a good amount of kasim³ fruit (*paederia foetida*), a foetid climber. This fruit is very foul-smelling. The monkey hastened directly to the armourer's workshop, and belched expectantly. As his breath was extremely malodorous, it displeased Kamal Aepa Mande Ajepa so much that he dealt the lower buttocks of Krek Meh-a a tremendous blow with his hammer. Because of that blow the lower buttocks of the common brown short-tailed monkeys remain flattened even to this day.

As Matchru Tori continued homeward, he met Goera and Toajeng Abaljeng. They were coming towards him from the opposite direction. Beholding the lone traveller and his heavy burden, Goera exclaimed :

"What a fine, broad *milam* ! Would you kindly allow me to take it up in my hands and examine it ?"

Matchru Tori graciously consented to this request. So, without the least exertion, Goera took up the *milam* in his hands and examined it meticulously, turning it round and round. Its workmanship won his admiration. The sword had a two-edged blade. Each side of the blade was twelve cubits wide and nearly ninety cubits long. The point was arrow-shaped. From hilt to tip it was made of one solid piece of extremely bright, tough steel. The curved grip was comparatively thin and twelve cubits in circumference. The hilt was sharp and fashioned so as to enable the user to stick the sword into the ground from that end. Just above the grip of the *milam* was a crossbar at the ends of which were attached bushy tails of flowing golden hair of lusty bulls.

Twiddling the *milam* between his fingers, Goera brandished and flourished it several times in the air. The sword was fulgurine. It emitted brilliant flashes of light which so frightened Matchru Tori that he jumped up, fled away, and would not look back to save his life. Goera tried to pacify him; but the owner of the sword would listen to no persuasions. Instead he yelled back over his shoulder that Goera could take

or leave the sword as he wished ; but that he himself had no desire to possess a weapon that had such evil spirits in it. Goera tried to offer him his own streaked stick which he had with him in exchange for the *milam* ; Matchru Tori was so busy putting distance between himself and the diabolical sword that he would not listen to the hero or enter into any unnecessary bargains with him. So, Goera finally hurled his stick after Matchru Tori, saying ;

“Here’s my stick. Take it or leave it yourself.”

The propelled stick fixed itself in the rear of Matchru Tori. There it remains to this very day as the beautiful tail of the civet-cat. Goera now took possession of the wonderful *milam* and it became a formidable weapon in his hands.

The two travellers, Goera and Toajeng Abiljeng, finally reached their destination, the workshop of Dykgyl Khongshyl and entreated him to cast for the hero a wonder bow and arrows. The bow was to be such as to discharge at one shot twelve fiery arrows as flashing and terrible as lightning. But Dykgyl Khongshyl would not comply with Goera’s request no matter how earnestly he entreated him. He falsely pleaded saying, “Mulbalwa pikjok, Silkam panggipikjok.” That is, “Wind has devastated the bellows and the anvil has been uprooted.” Finally, at the end of full twelve days and full twelve nights, the companion of Goera, Toajeng Abiljeng, lost his temper and threatened to hew down the main pillar of the founder’s house with his axe. This brought Dykgyl Khongshyl to terms ; and he consented finally to prepare the bow and arrows for Goera.

For full twelve days and full twelve nights the founder was busily engaged in casting the bow and arrows. All his attendants had their hands full in performing the task. Consequently, during that time continuous clanging noise was heard coming from the workshop and immense volumes of black smoke belched forth and twisted upward. The sky was lurid from the light of the workshop in full swing. When the full twelve days and the full twelve nights were up, the task of making of the bow and thousands of arrows for it was completed. Goera found the bows and arrows suitable ; in fact, they were just as he wanted them to be.

Dykgyl Khongshyl asked Goera to try the strength of the bow at the gigantic mango tree which was growing luxuriantly

front of his house. Goera did so on the condition that he would not be held responsible for the damage should it be destroyed. The founder agreed; so Goera shot at the full-bloomed tree, shattering it to smithereens even to the very roots. The young hero then uttered some incantations over the remaining threads of roots and caused the tree to spring up anew. As a result of the experiment thus performed upon the tree, the acidulous element remains innate in all species of mango trees. The cause of the acidulous element was the newly cast arrows used by Goera in his shooting. The experiment of destruction and restoration of the mango tree by Goera led the Achiks to perform *Wahmisna* sacrifice⁴ at the foot of a blighted tree struck by lightning. This sacrifice is performed now and then by the Achiks so that harm may not come to life and property in the vicinity in which they dwell.

Now Dykgyl Khongshyl would not accept any remuneration for his services, saying that he would be proud only to share the glory which he assured himself, Goera would achieve with the bow and arrows. He taught Goera how to prepare extra arrows for his bow and fill his quivers with them.

Goera and Toajeng Abiljeng started for home. They thanked Dykgyl Khongsyl as best as they could for the wonderful bow and arrows. The founder, on his part, gave the two intrepid young men a hearty send-off by entertaining them with a sumptuous feast. And so the heroes went their way. They passed through the countries of Ahkhuasi Ahbolgro,⁵ Ahkhuasi Rongpakdare,⁶ and Warigitchak Chigandrak.⁷ It was at the last named place that they took their midday meal and parted company. Toajeng Abiljeng promised Goera to rejoin him later on.

While returning home, Goera tried his arrows on thousands of trees standing by the roadside. This he did as a sort of target practice. The trees hit by his arrows were all shattered to splinters and made to wither. People were startled out of their wits by the terrible whizz of Goera's flying arrows. Many of them fell ill from sheer fright. Goera speedily cured all who suffered on his account as well as from other causes by the mere touch of his bow and arrows. Even the most virulent and fell diseases were suddenly cured in this way.

When Goera reached home an extraordinary feast was

held in his honour for full seven days and full seven nights in his mother's house. Goera was the first to receive the best and purest *chubitchi* (extract of rice-beer) from the hands of his mother and grandmother. Both of them tried to deter him for the dangerous undertaking he envisaged of fighting the monster-boar. They said to him :

"The whole world fears Wakmangganchi Aragondi. A warrior-god alone can successfully fight against such a dreadfully mighty foe. Pray, do not uselessly risk your life."

Without the least embarrassment, Goera replied :

"If a warrior-god alone can slay the monster-boar, I do not see why I cannot raise myself to the rank of one by trying to slay it. I will form an alliance with the gods and fight the boar. Yea, I will drink deep at the fountain of strength and wisdom. I fear not the savage, brainless, mighty boar. Replenished eternally from the central source of life, light and strength, as I will ever be, mother, through my union with the gods, I will crush this mighty monster, this implacable plague of the human race."

V

Goera, as he had said, formed an alliance with Tengte Kacha, the King of the Elfs, and a dwarf god, named Maal. Both of them were scarcely two cubits in height; yet they possessed supernatural powers. Goera and Toajeng Abiljeng, who had now rejoined him, set out in search of the monster-boar and at length discovered it lying asleep, wallowed in deep mud at Ahnima Gruram Chinima Rangsitram.

Now Goera decided that all the fighting should be done single-handed by himself. To Toajeng Abiljeng was assigned the task of stirring up the monster-boar from its noisy slumber with a mighty blow of his axe on the beast's haunches. Tengte Racha and Maal vounteered to pile up stones for Goera so that he could put himself beyond danger during the on-coming struggle. Maal, accordingly, brought up huge hard stones from the subterranean region; for the stones of the terrestrial surface were not yet sufficiently hardened. Tengte Racha piled up the stones thus brought up in the meantime into seven groups over an extensive area.

When Goera was ready for battle, Toajeng Abiljeng approached the monster-boar stealthily and dealt it a tremendous blow with his axe on its haunches. He then ran away as fast as his feet would carry him. The huge beast, suddenly startled from its deep slumber, stood up as high as a mountain, yawned and looked around absently, and then spying Goera furiously rushed at him, grunting and snorting thunderously. The young hero met the oncoming beast with a mighty rain of his fiery darts. At this the beast turned and took to his heels. The fatal arrows were too much for it. So it ran on and on towards the East. Goera pursued it hotly, ceaselessly discharging his fatal shafts after it and terribly lacerating its huge body. The beast then turned North and ran along the banks of the Songdu river. Impeded by the mighty mountains of Songdu Bisik Matpa Achik,² it swerved round and retraced its steps, making wild and random sallies far and wide over Nokrek, Medan, Khilbolma, Methongbol, Jadisil Gonggret, Gawakma Gawe, Ramchengga and Nengru Ahphal.³ Goera persistently tracked it down and discharged his unerring arrows without pause.

The monster-boar was now mad with fear and anger. At length it suddenly whirled round and made desperate charges at Goera. But he avoided its onslaughts by leaping adroitly from one stone pile to another. The beast then ran past Mahadeo, Chandodengga, Balphakram and Chikhusu,⁴ turned round from time to time, and repeatedly charged Goera breaking through the stone piles in seven different sectors. By and by Goera found himself in a fix. He was driven to take his stand on a disadvantageous position and resist the boar's charges with his back to the wall. Finally, as things began to worsen for the hero and he was in great danger of being swallowed up by the monster, his maternal uncle Ahning Doenagrak Chining Doenagrak Chining Doenagaja in the nick of time shot up his arrow from the subterranean region right through the armpit of the monster-boar. For a while the enormous beast staggered weakly and then finally fell down dead at Ahguara Rongpakmare Shohlyng Janthihol⁵ with its head towards the East.

Goera cut asunder the head of the monster-boar with one mighty blow of his milam at the main neck, and, in a clear, thunderous voice, exultingly shouted :

"Goera, the Invincible, as strong and Invulnerable as the adamantine Rocks !"

The people gave Goera the name of Bil Goera Jakbal Nisi Chela Rongdot Jakthong Manggot.⁶ His name and fame spread like wildfire far and wide throughout the whole world. He achieved everlasting greatness, raised himself to the rank of the gods, and thus attained to immortality.

After the slaughter of the beast, Goera ripped open the belly of the monster-boar. Rokman Meh-a and Chengman Phante were still alive inside the stomach; but they were rendered totally blind. They were carefully taken out and bathed. Tengte Racha and Jugi Phante⁷ nursed them diligently at Goerani Nokphante Diplokni Guare.⁸ Ultimately they recovered with their eyesight restored.

The struggle between Goera and the monster-boar had lasted for full seven summers and full seven winters. During those days there was a continuous rumbling noise and a constant hubbub of all the elements the world over. The earth ceaselessly quaked to its very depths. It appeared as if the whole world itself was engaged in a never-ending armageddon.

Some of the stone piles which resisted the mad career of the monster-boar during the conflict are still to be seen in places between Shohra (i.e. the modern Cherrapunjee in the Khasia Hills) and the Bhuga River in the Garo Hills, terminating in the latter at Rongnokma Rongjamdap.⁹ They are known as *Goerani Ronggat* or the Stone Piles of Goera. The fossilized pieces of excrements of the monster-boar, in which seed of pumpkins, gourds, melons and grains are found imbedded, and patches of red land, on which showers of its blood fell during the struggle, are still visible in those places.

The flesh of the monster-boar was cut into pieces and slices were distributed to people known as Jahphangma Khingwangma,¹⁰ Nokkima, Jamkimma,¹¹ Gara,¹² Ganching,¹³ Chisak,¹⁴ Matchi,¹⁵ Dual,¹⁶ Mehgam Nongal¹⁷ and Dykgyl Kamal.¹⁸ Its jaws and ears were put up on raised wooden poles at Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding. The superfluous flesh was left to decompose at Baringgre and Pakregre.¹⁹ Three of the bowl-shaped gongs which had been then used as receptacles for the flesh of the monster-boar, are still seen each respectively at

Dawa, Dohbu²⁰ and on the Chikmang Hill in the modern Garo Hills.

Goera had a large portion of the flesh of the enormous boar cooked at Shohlying Janthikhol.²¹ The cooked meat was spread out for eating, and Goera challenged Wana Wangga to an eating bout with him. The meat was apportioned into two equal parts for this purpose. Victory was to be accorded to the one who could finish his portion first. During the heat of the competition Goera found himself unequal to the prowess of the patriarchal head of the tigrine race in eating; so he devised a trick in order to avoid the ignominy of defeat. All of a sudden he feigned to faint for want of water to wash down a piece of meat supposedly stuck in his throat. He requested his rival to rush down and draw some water for him from the Simsang River.

Wana Wangga immediately left the place, and taking with him a long piece of hollow bamboo consisting of thirty nodes, set off to the river. While he was gone, Goera scattered handfuls of meat out of his share right and left in all directions. The pieces of meat which he had thus strewn about, had in the course of time turned into crystal rocks and remained ever as such.

When Goera saw Wana Wangga returning, he pretended to resume eating up his share of the meat. He said to his duped rival :

"You have come back too late. The meat that gorged my throat has already gone down to my stomach. I could not wait for water any longer; so I have been devouring my share of the meat."

In a short while the last remnant of Goera's pile was finished in the presence of his rival. Wana Wangga believed that the lot which fell to his rival had really been eaten on the spot and he had to acknowledge defeat on his part. He left his heap of meat untouched and unfinished just as it had remained when he went away to draw water for Goera. This heap of meat became fossilized into white and reddish crystal rocks. It is still to be seen in the neighbourhood of Shohlying stream.

VI

A grand feast in honour of Goera's victory over the monster-boar was held in the village of his mother for full seven days and full seven nights. All sorts of food and the best chubitchi (extract of rice-beer) flowed like water in the house during the feast.

Goera had by now attained the prime of manhood. He built a huge house for himself. This house stood on a par with the many mighty mansions of the great gods. Susime, Sangmaracha, Dikki and Bandi who became very ardent admirers of Goera, built their houses beside his. Their houses have long been fossilized and remained as huge rocks. These in addition to Giting's fossilized rod and basket are still to be seen in the vicinity of the Balphakram Hills in the South-eastern portion of the Garo Hills. Bandi and Dikki followed Goera's footsteps in courage, manliness and martial activities. Giting, the daughter of Durarcha was the wife of Dikki, and Shohre the daughter of Bamindri was the spouse of Bandi.

Goera did not remain long in his house. As he found a life of inactivity too stale and unprofitable, he wandered all over the world in search of fresh adventures. In the course of his ramblings on many a strand, he directed his exploits against a great number of hideous monsters, which were accustomed to play havoc with human lives, and systematically exterminated them all. He rescued his elder sisters, who had been carried off by Sheh-elja Wachingja, the patriarchal head of the dogs. Buga Raja, the patriarchal head of the mermen, who had decoyed Goera's elder sister Mehjakchi Kahsyndik,¹ was defeated by the hero in a bloody encounter. But the girl was not rescued as she had been confined inside some impregnable rocks by Bugarik Bugasil,² who was Buga Raja's servant.

This Bugarik Bugasil was the progenitor of the giant aquatic serpents which are known as *sangkinnies*. They seldom appear out of water for fear of Goera.

One of the most formidable monsters which was numbered among those slain by Goera in his ramblings was a gargantuan ogress, named Budangma. She was as tall as the highest tree on earth, and looked like an extremely ugly hag of colossal size. She had an enormously protruding nose, thick pouting lips, one

piercing eye in the centre of her forehead, and ear-lobes which reached down to her ankles. These last she used as her bed covering when she slept. Her strength was tremendous; and she was the terror of the children of that age; for she used to come stealthily to the villages at night and carry them away in order to eat them alive. Goera in a single combat completely overthrew her. With one blow of his formidable milam he felled her and hacked her body into pieces.

In one outermost corner of the earth, Goera came across a cruel giantess named Noeri Simeri Jahpramma³ who could make herself invisible when in pursuit of her quarry. She had in her possession hammers of different sizes and patterns with which she used to mow down her victims. Goera saw her sound asleep; so he picked up a massive hammer with which the giantess used to kill elephants, and hit her a violent blow on the forehead. The giantess woke up, looked stunned for a moment, regained her full consciousness and started after Goera. He ran away in terror, screaming:

"Uncle, save me! Uncle, save me!"

Goera continued to flee and dashed up a mighty wooded mountain where a large number of huluk apes were chattering in the trees. The giantess imagined that their uproarious hue and cry was that of Goera's uncle; so she, in turn, fled in terror.

Having performed innumerable deeds of daring and courage in the course of his long excursions, Goera returned home in triumph. One winter evening as he sat at home with his grandmother by a fireside he, in bold language and with defiance on his countenance, boasted:

"Grandma, I am afraid of nothing in the world, I have smitten the monster-boar, defeated Wana Wangga and overcome the matriarchal heads of bamboos, trees, and the like. In short I have conquered all sentient beings and elements in the world. Do you think, grandma, that there is anybody else whom I cannot defeat in a fair fight?"

His grandmother, peeved at his self-conceit, said sharply:

"If you want to encounter one whom you will not be able to vanquish, just go out tonight to the spur of a hill in Maadi Rongkuchu,⁴ take off your clothes and sit there naked for the night."

Goera took up his bow and arrows and went out to meet

the unknown foe. He took off his clothes and sat naked as ordered on the top of Maadi Rongkuchi. Soon he felt the biting touch of Suuri Wakma Sinchichikma Khoripokma,⁵ the Snow-goddess and swooned. In the morning he was picked up half-dead by his grandmother, brought home, and put beside a glowing hearth fire. When he had regained consciousness, Goera fully acknowledged the superior prowess of Mother Cold, adding as an alibi that he could find no fair way of conquering her.

VII

As both Goera and Wana Wangga were the strongest beings in the world, there was a constant contest between them for supremacy. One day Goera was engaged in clearing jungle for *jhum* cultivation. At that precise moment Wana Wangga lay in ambush in the same jungle waiting to kill him; but Goera was ever alert and watchful. His presence of mind and unerring self-guard never left him even for a moment. With his penetrating eyes he spotted Wana Wangga and wielded his chopper right and left, cutting down trees, shrubs and grass in such a dangerous manner that he appeared not to have seen Wana Wangga at all. His rival had to flee for his life.

Now, long before Goera was born, when Kabu Renche was big with child, Duhmerong Duhcherong had been greatly worried by a large number of deer which used to destroy the crops in his fields. So he entreated Wana Wangga to rid him of the annoying animals. As a reward for his services, Duhmarong Duhcherong offered Wana Wangga his yet unborn child, saying :

"If the child be a male, you can have him for your meal. If it be a female, you may marry her."

Wana Wangga accepted the terms of the agreement and zealously began his work of carnage. He slaughtered deer wholesale, with the exception of one pregnant roe whose foal happened to be a hart. Had it not been for this excepted roe, we should not now see any deer at all.

The promised child was born; it was a female. The parents tried every sort of dodge in order to retain the child. At one time they lied saying that the childbirth had ended in a miscarriage. At another time they tried to conceal the child

under different names. But all their stratagems were in vain, for Wana Wangga had already sensed that the child was born aright and he looked forward to the time when she should reach maidenhood and he could take her to wife.

Duhmerong Duhcherong gave the girl-baby a permanent name, calling it Nireja Sanjeja. She grew up to be an exquisitely beautiful girl. At that time there lived another accomplished and beautiful woman named Ahning Rimit Chining Chimit Doldol Tira whom Nireja Sanjeja alone surpassed in beauty and comeliness. One day Ahning Rimit came to the Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding market where she was ridiculed by the people for her inability to bear children.

Marakma Makalma Khohmama Gale Rengshe² and Shangma Ranjma³ were Nireja Sanjeja's relations. They begged her parents one day to bring her to the market of Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding. There Wana Wangga followed her and centered his amorous attentions on her.

Now Marakma Makalma himself fell in love with Nireja Sanjeja and wanted to marry her; but he was dreadfully afraid of Wana Wangga to whom he knew she was already espoused. So, he fashioned an image of the girl out of straw and mud and had it clad in her clothes in such a way that it looked exactly like her in form and features. He set up this image in the market of Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding. Wana Wangga took the image to be his betrothed and presented himself before it in all his finery. Meanwhile, Marakma Makalma carried off Nireja Sanjeja to Mangshng Ahsong⁴ and kept her hidden in the rocky cave of Doro Ahkhuchot Rado Chubanda.⁵ He posted one of his friends on the way to deter his rival should the latter come in pursuit of them.

When Wangga found out that he had been wasting his thoughts and passions on an image of his espoused wife, he grew mad with anger and came running after Marakma Makalma.

On the way he was put off the track by a friend of his rival and so ultimately had to return home disappointed. On the way he stamped the earth fiercely at Ahdokgre⁶ and shook the trees violently at Bolmoram⁷ in great vexation of spirit. However, to revenge himself upon the man who had treacherously robbed him of his bride-to-be, Wana Wangga went direct to Marakma

Makalma's house and killed his mother, Apri Silmite, while she was plucking the leaves of the *Shakap* tree (*grewialiloe folia*) to be used in brewing rice-beer. Dohkru Miwepa Ahsivm Chiwepa,⁸ the patriarchal head of the pigeon family, was the sole eye-witness of this murderous assault.

Some time afterwards Wana Wangga caught Marakma Makalma in the very act of stealing fish from a conical-shaped basket fishing trap set by himself in the stream of Dijang-Bra Dilsing Gitel. He promptly pounced upon the thief, gouged out his eyes with his claws and broke both his legs. Marakma Makalma then crawled home, groping his way as best as he could. There he was cared for by his female relations, and, when he had recovered sufficiently enough, he was employed to drive away fowls from the courtyard where paddy was spread out in the sun to dry. One day Dohkru Miwepa flew down to him and said sympathetically :

"Marakma Makalma, you will regain your eyesight and your legs will be made whole, if you but touch a small rusty hoe and the bamboo pillar of a heart-rack."

The blind and crippled man, greatly resented this suggestion to his affliction which he took as an insult, and invoked curses on the gentle bird, saying :

"Let tigers kill you and falcons devour you."

Dohkru Miwepa calmly replied : "I have told you the truth. No evil can come to me from tigers or falcons. I and my race are immune from them. Hence, your curse will bear no fruit."

Hearing this bold reply, Marakma Makalma did as he was advised and his eyesight was promptly restored and his lameness suddenly gone. He carried the hoe away, but it slipped out of his hands at Doro Ahkhuchot Rado Chubanda and grew into a gigantic Poison Tree, known as Bisibol Bijongbol. It produced poisonous fruit, but grew so tall that no one could reach it. Finally Krekmeh-a Chandal Phante, the patriarchal head of the parrots, procured the fruit for Marakma Makalma who fried them and kept the poison for himself.

Bitter hostilities now sprang up between the restored Marakma Makalma and his bitter enemy Wana Wangga. Whenever they happened to meet, they fought hard against each other. Wana Wangga always got the upper hand in these skirmishes. Once

when he was about to overwhelm once and for all his foe, Marakma Makalma, Goera incidentally came by and joined forces against the patriarchal head of the tigrine race. In order to loosen Wana Wangga's grip on his victim, Goera took hold of his right hand and pried it with the hooked-point of his arrow. This is the reason why tigers now always lift their left paw first when attacking their prey. Also a broken piece of Goera's arrow is still visible in the form of a hook-shaped bone in the right shoulder of the tiger. This hook-shaped bone is called *Goerani Milsa* that is, the Hook of Goera, by the Achiks up to this day.

As Goera had been the most implacable foe of all dangerous wild beasts, and, as the patriarchal head of the tigrine race finally acknowledged Goera's alertness, agility and unerring presence of mind superior to his, the Achiks nowadays drive away wild beasts, especially tigers, in the name of Goera. Accordingly, if an Achik comes across a tiger unawares, he will, in order to drive it off, shout out at the top of his voice :

"Ka Shangma am I, ever watchful, alert, agile and plucky as Goera. My presence of mind never deserts me even in dreams and visions at night. In personal prowess and attributes I am as great as Goera; as strong and wide-awake as Penthora."

Penthora is another panegyric name for Goera. As a Shangma proved himself superior to all the members of other clans in prowess, art and wisdom in the beginning, a man, no matter if he really belongs to the Marak or Momin *katchis* (matri-phratry), must of necessity, safely call himself Shangma on such occasions. An Achik really jeopardises his life,¹⁰ if in the presence of tigers, especially man-eaters, he calls himself Marak or Momin.

VIII

Goera now decided to cultivate land and settle down. Implements of husbandry of that age were imperfectly crude; so he had to go to the Ahkhang Batmara¹ and Kinma Dohda² markets in search of better ones. Accordingly, he proceeded to the delightful fairy land of Balimit³ and the happy watering-place of Banbae.⁴

On the way to Banbae, Goera made acquaintance with Innang Phalkhang Norang Jipjang⁵ the goddess of Love, and Ahning Kimrashil Chining Noreshil Noareni Nogni, the goddess of pleasure. It was from them that he secured an extremely sweet-smelling philtral herb, known as *mongera* or *bengera* or *singsingbal* which was infallible in instantly making any woman madly fall in love with the possessor.

Goera tried the philtral herb on an extremely beautiful woman whose name was Ahning Rimit Chining Chimit Doldol Tira. She then made amorous advances on Goera, and followed him to the Mangra Anthi Mehmang Nikgil⁷ market, where they obtained some betelnuts and betel-vine leaves (piper betel). These they mixed with lime and chewed them gaily as they walked along, laughing and talking in the most romantic fashion. Although this woman outwardly manifested all signs of perfect womanhood, she did not possess the power of bearing children. So when Goera, who was greatly charmed by her beauty, learned of this physical deficiency, he abandoned her in loathful despair.

Greatly disappointed at this desertion, the woman made her way to the rock sources of the hill streams and there prayed to Salgra to transform her into another being. The god heard her pitiful prayer and she was turned into a yellowish, speckled, fresh-water frog. Her offspring came forth in form of eggs. Her descendants are still seen as the *gandraks*. They yet boastfully acknowledge Goera as their common father and rejoice at the advent of the rains, when they sing songs of love and welcome to him. They bound with joy at his yearly visit to the earth.

When the thunder begins to rumble deeply among the hills, when great sheets of lightning light the sky and earth with brief brilliance, and when the angry clouds change through successive stages: from black threatening masses to grey banks and finally to mere white wisps, the *gandraks* know that the rains are nearing their end and that soon Goera will be lost to them in the high ethereal heavens; and so, at this time of the year, the joyful frogs sing songs of love and adieu to their maid parent, while they sit on the smooth rocks beside roaring waterfalls or near murmuring cascades and leaping cataracts in the hills of Achik Ahsong.

Goera soon realized the bitterness and futility of making love to the fair sex ; so he gladly discarded the philtral-herb. A man named Thorik Racha found it later and planted it in his garden. This is how man came to possess the lover's herb.

At length Goera arrived at the workshop of Ahning Komma Raja Chining Komma Racha,⁸ the prince of blacksmiths, at Saljongpatra Rongdohgachal.⁹ Having secured the necessary implements of husbandry from him, Goera returned home. On the way a human patriarch, named Bone Nirepa Jane Nitepa,¹⁰ discerned the implements in Goera's hands and proceeded to copy them for himself. When he had fully succeeded in so doing, he introduced them to mankind. This patriarch was also the first person to discover edible cereals and cultivate them in his jhum fields.

Goera cleared the jungle at Ranggi Rangwal Ahding Mao Gypeng Chiring¹¹ now known as Rangdi Agal.¹² He built a *bohrang*, a high-machanned house, at Rongguare Rongpak-dare Balwa Gitokram Ahning Jajokram Songdu Guuri Dinram Misi Sahra Roram.¹³ Every day he invited to his house all the fair goddesses, nymphs, fairies, gnomes and naiads of the age who lived under the ground, beneath the water, and in the ethereal regions ; with them he had various diversions in the morning, evening and night. He played his flute so skillfully in the most romantic and soul-stirring cadence that thousands of the fair goddesses with their long flowing tresses, nymphs with their bright red lips, fairies and naiads with their charming looks, bewitching eyes and slender arms and legs, all came trooping by with lovely smiles on their lips and danced the same steps and executed the same twirls and flourishes in absolute unison with his merry tunes. In this fashion hundreds of days and nights passed in unrivalled jollity and unparalleled merriment. Toajeng Abiljeng, Goera's bosom friend, often paid him a visit in his high house ; and they had grand feasts for days on end together.

One night when Goera was alone enjoying the beautiful scenery of his expansive fields stretching to the distant hills that formed the horizon in the west, he overheard divinations of Okgupu Soetpa the patriarchal head of the porcupines. The animal was considering whether or not he would devour the helpless runaway slave who had taken refuge in his habitat.

Goera listened intently as the patriarchal head of the porcupines uttered the following prayer :—

“The gods approving, outright upon this man
Will I spring with all my might and main ;
Burying my sharp teeth in his throat, and
Killing him cocksure, and then expose to the skies
His white teeth as evident tokens of my superior wiles.
Surely will I devour his flesh, sparing his ear-lobes
Which will be raised on wooden poles for travellers
Just at the parting of the ways ;
Leaving a portion of his flesh and blood
At the slaughtering place to Bisikkram, the Goddess,
Hear, O ye gods, if ye approve my plan.”

Goera, in playfulness, answered in a deep, solemn, stentorian voice :

“Thou art destined to live on pumpkins, melons, maize, gourds with crooked necks and serpentine tuberous roots.”

Okgupu Soetpa believed that these words proceeded from one of the gods above in answer to his divinations. So he entirely abandoned the idea of slaying the man and ceased to be carnivorous. Ever since that time porcupines have been vegetarians.

Okgupu Soetpa then brought the fugitive to his home and gave him a grand feed. All sorts of food and wine flowed in abundance. The man ate and drank to his heart's content. He then went out into the open space in front of Okgupu Soetpa's house and skipped and danced with joy. As he did so, some tigers espied him and rushed to devour him. Okgupu Soetpa quickly bade him enter his house while he placed some protecting palisades in front of his dwelling to keep off the tigers. The wild beasts then retired in defeat. Okgupu Soetpa's palisades were nothing more than jungle-leeches. And so this is the reason why up to this very day numerous jungle-leeches are to be found at the approaches to the burrows of all porcupines.

The next night Okgupu Soetpa made a stealthy march to the fields of Goera where pumpkins, melons, gourds, yams, and *kochoos* and various sorts of edibles were growing in great abundance. He made a hearty meal of the produce eating with gusto all the night long. In the morning, when Goera discovered

the devastation wrought by the patriarchal head of the porcupines, he was greatly incensed. So, in a moment of wrath, he mercilessly pelted hundreds of pebbles at Okgupu Soetpa who was placidly basking himself in the sun outside his burrow. The pebbles accurately struck and severely maimed the unsuspecting animal. Okgupu Soetpa tried every healing herb, every known drug on his bruised body in order to cure himself of the wounds which he had sustained. Eventually, he did recover partially, but from that time he had to walk with a limp. This is the reason why all porcupines, the descendants of Okgupu Soetpa, cannot walk straight or stand erect but have to assume a rheumatic gait up to this very day.

On account of Okgupu Soetpa's having taken internally lots of herbs and drugs during the time of his affliction, the bodies of his descendants are rendered immune from the effects of any fatal kind of poison up to this very day. That is to say, porcupines cannot be killed by any known poison.¹⁴

IX

The matrilineal relations of Goera now shifted their settlement to Grangre Rangkildi.¹ Its watering place is called Chikhasin Chijrim.²

Goera's younger sister, Noe Note, weeded his fields in half a day. Once while she was engaged in this work, Ilka Nokma Ganggi Banja, the patriarchal head of the mantises, became violently enamoured of her beauty; for Noe Note was indeed very beautiful. Her face was like a full moon in radiance; her teeth were like strings of pearls; her breath issuing from her coral lips was like myrrh; and she was as graceful as a mountain gazelle. Besides she was a wise, modest, hard working woman. So, with the express intention of wooing her, Ilka Nokma came close to her and made known the secret longings of his heart. Noe Note promptly spurned him and ultimately told her brother of the incident.

Goera was beside himself with rage at the undue liberties taken with his beautiful sister. He rained down his fiery darts upon the mantises and killed a great many of them. At length, headed by Ilka Nokma, a delegation came to him in a body and prayed for mercy. Goera pardoned them on the condition

that they should forever remain in the same attitude of prayer which they now assumed. On that account mantises who nowadays fail to obey this dictum are struck by lightning with the tree or object on which they rest.

At the approach of harvest time, Goera went to the Kimma Dohda market. Noe Note meanwhile gathered the harvest from the fields during his absence. The threshed grains of paddy filled seven granaries. When Goera came back home, he soberly asked his sister how much paddy she got from his fields. In her excessive joy over the rich harvest, Noe Note felt inclined to be sportive at that moment; so she said jokingly to her brother :

"The harvest from your fields was so poor that it hardly filled one dengpin (fishing basket)."

Now Goera was not at all accustomed to cut jokes. It was his wonted frame of mind to take things as they were stated to be until strong evidence proved the contrary. So he took his sister at her word and inwardly fumed at such meagre returns from his expansive fields. The mischievous damsel, on her part, enjoyed the joke and gave her brother no hint that it was such. She went away with a big smile on her full-moon face.

Goera also possessed a hot and fiery temperament. He was wont to execute things in a straightforward manner and would not palaver much in any thing. So, in a moment of great wrath, he at once rushed to the barn which supposedly contained his meagre paddy returns and set it ablaze. The flames spread rapidly and soon became a great conflagration in which all the barns of the village with their newly-gathered harvest were burnt to the ground. The spot where these barns were consumed by fire is now known as Mebit Mebang.³

Goera's relations and fellow-villagers now angrily remonstrated with him and reproached him publicly for his latest atrocity and manifestation of bad temper. At this time he was much exposed to personal attacks. The young hero, however, did not take the world and its follies too seriously although he often smarted under such public admonitions. It was not his nature to launch personal recriminations, however annoyed he might be by men's cavillings. Whatever wrongs he committed against his fellowmen were never executed out of pure malice.

To him was not denied the greatness of soul and breadth of vision.

One day Goera gathered together all his matrilineal relations and the people of the regions about, raised himself on a wisp of white cloud, and standing like a solitary warrior in full panoply, addressed them, saying :

"I now go to the celestial regions from this world of dust and useless turmoil. I find it no longer necessary for me to live a dusty life among you. I take more delight in the dwellers of the high heavens. In the ethereal regions I will remain as one of the immortals forever. My soul yearns for the infinite. Ye, men and women, are but shadow actors upon the screen of space. But while the universe lasts everything exists in an Eternal Now.

"By the time Nore Chire, the goddess of Rain, visits the earth and when rainclouds gather and peacocks cry, completely enshrouded in clouds and rain I will come to visit this world of yours. Then I will play pranks on trees or on whatsoever I shall be pleased to strike, by sending my arrows at them from my trusty bow. You will also notice flashes of light from my *milam* when I flourish it in the execution of my martial exercises. You will hear deep rumbling noises caused by my steps when I dance in unison with the awful music of all space. These things will continue to remind you beings here below of my glorious name. Thus will I dance on. I will be one with the SUPREME BEING, who dances eternally.

"Now, listen to my instructions on matters of vital importance to you in the pursuit of your daily lives."

Here Goera gave his listeners instructions on matters of health and strength, on husbandry, on the proper performance of sacrificial ceremonies in honour of the gods and goddesses, on observances to be carried out by men and women in cases of birth, marriage, death, accidents, illness and in encountering various kinds of wild beasts, and finally on the maintenance of a just, equitable and peaceful relationship between the gods and men and women.

"Men and gods," concluded Goera, "require not much talk, but action. So think and act according to the true and just promptings of your hearts and minds. Be faithful and honest to your true selves. Reflect on the sum total of the real high and noble longings of your hearts and minds."

Goera's listeners were deeply moved by his stirring words ; for they now found that he spoke as if he were a man transformed into a god. They earnestly prayed that he would remain with them as their guide and protector, as their very tower of strength ; but he reiterated that he must needs leave them and hide himself from their sight. Still he reminded them that his presence and power would pervade all space. He added :

"You will worship me more when I manifest myself to you solely through my deeds."

With these words the great hero, Goera, disappeared in the twinkling of an eye into the ethereal heavens, taking with him in his hands his beloved *milam*, bow and arrows.

Goera has always appeared to be in the very prime and splendour of life, and the mere idea of age as connected with him has been absurd and incongruous. Goera had made alliances with Balwa Balgira, the wind-god, and with the sons and daughters of Misi Saljong. Escorted by Noe and Juge Balje, the grand-daughters of Misi Saljong, and in the fulness of health, strength and effervescence of youth, he ascended voluntarily to the high heavens. Ever since he has been dwelling there in the high and holy atmosphere, free from the chains, the walls, the limitations of mortal life.

To the Achiks Goera is the Immortal and Invincible god of Thunder and Lightning,⁴ the most extraordinary power in all the world or in the whole atmosphere. He is also worshipped as the god of Health and Strength. Prayers are offered to him for these two things health and strength. The flashes of his mighty *milam*, lighting the earth and heaven with brief brilliance, are seen during cloudy and stormy weather when loud rumbles and sudden claps of thunder are also audible. The destructive agent in a lightning flash is an arrow or shaft from Goera's bow. It is a hot solid body which moves rapidly through space and impinges upon something. It is the thunder-bolt stone, known as *Goerani Rongpra*, the stone shaft of Goera. At least that is what the Achiks, the loyal worshippers of Goera, honestly proclaim.

X

Now Goera while he was on earth promised Toajeng Abiljeng, his faithful comrade, that he would grant him anything

he asked of him. The latter now felt that he himself was not endowed with enough virtue to accompany his lord and master to the higher regions; so he prayed to Goera, saying:

"O my lord, be graciously pleased to transform me into a bird, retaining my characteristic features and idiosyncracies in bird form and bird life. Change my axe into a bill that I may bore holes in the hardest wood. Be pleased to continue blasting trees for me with thy shafts that termites, insects and larvæ may shelter in the cracks, crevices, or bark-defoliation of their boles so that I may have plenty of food to eat as a bird."

Goera heard his lifelong friend's prayer and transformed him into a grey bird. His descendants remain up to this very day as the golden-backed woodpeckers. During cloudy days preceding thunderstorms, they fly about with a loud continuous "tla-ra-ra-ra tla-ra-ra-ra" as they flit happily from tree to tree. In this way they are singing songs of welcome to the invisible pilgrim, Goera, to this world. The burden of their song is as follows:

"Some murmur, saying 'tis bad weather
Some welcome it without murmur
But 'tis the fairest weather
When the Lord and us get together."

At the departure of Goera to heaven, his relations shifted to Ahshokme Ahjahphang, Balwa Gitokram, Guuri Jajokram, Dohreng Bawanggiram, Silchi Nokphanteram, Khatchi Gitokram, Jugi Melaram, Ahkhuasi Jahpa Cholsi.¹ Their watering place there was called Kharu Chimongram Rongma Dandakram.² In the course of time they died there and their bodies were cremated with an imposing ceremony befitting their rank and position. Their mortal remains thus became part and parcel of the precious elements of the earth.

Before her death, Goera's grandmother desired to inundate with the waters of the Simsang River the country where they had formerly settled. She decided that no one should inhabit it after they had departed. So, when all her people had been removed from the place, she dug out its most prominent hill and carried it on her back suspended from her head by means of her waist strap. This strap, known as *sengki*, she previously used in fastening her gana or petticoat round her waist. The grandmother was afraid that Goera would see her and punish

her for despoiling his native land, the *akhingland*, that is, hereditarily-held land of the Rongbang, if she carried the hill in the garish light of day. So she made up her mind to carry it away in the course of a single night and place it across the channel of the river as a dam in order to divert the course of the river towards her own beloved country, which she wanted to flood for good. However, the day dawned before she had reached the river-bed. She, therefore, had to drop the hill a little distance from the Simsang River on its left bank. The advent of dawn almost on the threshold of the undertaking was followed by the abandonment of her scheme. A scheme which might have changed the whole course of the Simsang River was thus strangled at its birth. This piece of land and rock which she carried and dropped still stands as a hill known to the people of Garoland as the Chitmang (or Waemong) Hill.³ The Achiks sometimes also call it Ambi Waemong Bri the ancient abode of Lord Mahadev and of grandmother Parvati.

—Told by Jingnang Marak Roksam
at Village Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

THE TIGER'S DIVINATION

One day a man named Dengga took up a sharp *dao* (hatchet) and went into a forest to cut bamboo. Presently he espied a lone royal tiger squatting on his haunches under a cluster of bushy *wahnok* bamboos (*bambusa teres*). The wild beast although seemingly absorbed in deep thought, was really well aware of the man's presence. Dengga quietly tiptoed nearer the tiger and eyed him intently. The king of the jungle was performing his divination ceremony, muttering gutturally the following words :

"Samjak wahjak, angko pindap
Gong jamdap, angko mildap.
Rongma chokdeng, angko dongpheng.
Simusamgop, angko pingop,
Samsimari, mittinari.
Sambipek, tahjak, boljak,
Mittindapbo, daajikjak." ¹

While he lies in wait for his prey, the tiger utters this prayer in which he entreats, some by their particular names, the leaves of trees, bamboos, plants and herbs to silently camouflage him and the jagged rocks to noiselessly shield him from view. Dengga clearly heard and fully understood the ominous words of the tiger. He kept his eyes glued on the wild beast.

Having finished reciting the aforementioned prayer, the tiger now pawed at the surface of the ground, picked up a clod of earth, and, gazing at it intently and profoundly, numbed the following :

"Deng, Dengga, inchi rehba,
Dahsimi Salgrami mijani Bahbrani
Angna patia gita, angna rahrona gita.
Dengga nah-a, oe ia,
Nah-a angni adal mahni bah-ainthal.
Jadipchangbone, Jabrangbone." ²

These words were an address to the person the tiger would next devour, Dengga himself. Without looking at his intended victim, the wild beast had said : "Deng, Dengga, come thou hither, even as Salgra of old and Bahbra long ago predestined

thee to be mine. Yea, Dengga, thou art to be my food. Yea, ere since the day thy mother gave thee birth. Be thou stupefied. Be thou out of thy wits." Dengga once more clearly heard and fully understood the ominous words of the tiger.

While the beast was delivering the above speech over the clod of earth at which he gazed so intently as if to hypnotize it, Dengga, too, snatched up a similar clod and peered at it steadily. He was astounded at what he saw—the headless image of himself : An icy shiver passed through his frame, and the hair of his head stood erect in sheer terror. Dengga was, for the moment, really stupefied ; but, quickly getting hold of himself, with a mighty blow of his *dao*, he dexterously felled a giant solitary *wahnok* bamboo which was bent askew under the weight of its thick leaves. Down came the bamboo with a resounding crash. The tiger startled out of his wits by the sudden impact, leaped up terrifiedly and dashed away with terrific speed. Dengga danced about madly, shouting at the top of his voice : "Kha Shangma, Goera, Gualgija, Jajagija, Jajumangchiba Jakarechibak." By these words he meant to let the world know that he proudly belonged to the Shangma Clan. Therefore, he self-complacently and blatantly announced that he was as alert as Goera, never off his guard, even in dreams and trances.

After his encounter with the king of the jungle, Dengga immediately went home without felling any more bamboos. He had been destined to die that day at the hands of a tiger ; but, by his laudable presence of mind, pluck and courage, he had foiled the tiger's divination and turned his plans awry. The doom overhanging him had been averted and blotted out. Now that he had escaped death by tiger that day, Dengga was destined to die a natural death in his own good time.

Many years later Dengga was once travelling in the company of a man who was destined to be killed by a tiger. As they journeyed amicably together along a foot-path in a dense jungle, Dengga beheld in the distance a huge, royal tiger standing on the path in front of them. He immediately informed his travelling companion of what he saw ; but the latter sceptically replied :

"You are mistaking a muntjac (barking deer) for a tiger. No, it is positively not a tiger. It is simply a harmless muntjac. Your eyes must be deceiving you."

Dengga knew for a certainty that the animal in front of them was nothing other than a tiger. However, realizing the futility of trying to convince so arrogant a person, he discreetly replied :

"All right, my friend, you walk ahead, then."

As they drew nearer the waiting animal, Dengga observed the tiger pawing the earth in the middle of the foot-path in the form of a cross. He, too, though indistinctly, heard the tiger raspingly muttering something over the sign on the ground. His companion, however, neither noticing the tiger nor hearing his guttural utterances, proceeded on unconcernedly with his eyes cast down. Dengga, helplessly watching the man walk to his death, kept wisely in the background.

When the companion of Dengga came quite close to the fatal spot, the tiger quickly plunged into some jungle at the side of the foot-path, and waited for his unsuspecting prey. The man plodded on as arrogantly as ever. Just as he trod unknowingly upon the cross on the ground made by the tiger, the ferocious beast leaped out of his hiding place, felled his victim in the twinkling of an eye, lifted him in his mouth as a cat does a mouse, and dashed into the nearby thickets. Dengga sadly witnessed the grim tragedy which befell his arrogant and sceptical fellow-traveller.

When he himself arrived at the tragic spot, Dengga stepped intentionally on the cross to see what would happen. He felt himself growing warm and listless and gradually losing his senses. In this way he came to discover that the spot had been hypnotized by the avaricious tiger.

Dengga made his way without incident through the dense jungle, and arrived safely at home. There he lived in peace and happiness with his wife and children for many more years. When he finally died a natural death, his age was about one hundred and thirty years.

—Told by Remon Marak Raksam
at Village Dalbotgiri, District Garo Hills.

THE PROUD OWL AND THE RUINED FISHING HAWK

The patriarchal owl was known as Do'kupa Mikrimilthong Sa'nepa Skodottong. He was living as a grand bachelor in his mansions in a certain place, known as Walnasa Chidoreng Innawe Sokchimcheng. He was proud, boastful and always tried to show himself as superior to others in prowess and fortune. He was fond of tall talks. While he was living there, proudly blurting out, "Twack, Twack, Twack," morning and evening, his maternal relations respected him highly and always offered him the best food and the best liquid extract of rice-beer.

At that time there was raging a tragic war between the children of Ahning Chining on the one hand and the children of Misi Saljong on the other. While the war was in progress, a warrior-son of Misi Saljong, named Khorengpa Khobinpa Gaggipak Chidual, the Patriarchal Head of Hawks and Kites, was captured by the children of Ahning Chining and got his wings, tail-feathers and talons shorn off by them. He was in a pitiable plight. He was thus totally ruined. His was a picture of ghastly ruin of a warrior-hero. He looked clumsy, worn-out and decrepit. Therefore, nobody paid respects to him.

Feeling very sad and bitter at being treated by his maternal relations with scant respect, Khorengpa Khobinpa packed up some husked mibisa (small grained, fine) rice and some charcoal obtained by burning *sonaru* tree (*Acanthaciae*), bound them up together on his back and started to go to the abode of Dakgipa Rugipa Ma'gipa Jagring Bahbra Rurime, the Nature-Architect, in order to get himself remade and remodelled. While he was crossing a bridge constructed out of dried *sal* wood (*Shorea robusta*), he incidentally met Misi Susime Khatchi Biari, the Goddess of Fortune, who asked him whither he was bound thus equipped with charcoal and *mibisa* (fine small-grained rice). He replied :

"I have been shorn off of my wings, tail-feathers and talons by the children of Ahning Chining. Therefore, I am just going to the dim abode of august Dakgipa Rugipa, the Nature-Mother and Goddess, with a view to get myself remodelled and remoulded." Misi Susime Khatchi Biari dissuaded him saying. "You shall not be able to stand the poignant ordeal of reimpression and refashionment in that way; for you will be scorched unrecognisably. When monsoon winds do blow and rains come in profusion, betake yourself to a high jagged rock or the pointed branch of a dead wood, sit there continuously in rain and sunshine, hopefully spreading your wings wide and wait and wait most patiently. Then, only then, fresh wings and talons will grow again. Rely on your own courage and on your own brave heart for consolation. Achievement and confident greatness will be yours again."

Khorengpa Khobinpa acted in cheerful consonance with the advice of Misi Susime Khatchi Biari. "Pterophus—I grow my wings," said Khorengpa Khobinpa; and he evolved into a most majestic and glorious warrior.

When his wings and talons were rejuvenated on him fully, Khorengpa Khobinpa said to himself :

"Let me wait just a bit. And I will surely swoop down upon Ahning Mabitchi Chining Dokandi in avenging myself on her and bring her up to the terrestrial surface."

In course of time, Khorengpa Khobinpa bravely dashed down to the subterranean and underwater regions, attacked one female warrior, named Ahning Mechik Salne Tehrak, mistaking her for Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokandi Chongmitchang Patdrang, and forcibly dragged her up to the terrestrial surface amidst triumphant shouts of victory. By this act of daring and bravery, he made a name for himself. He was hailed as a hero by his relations and fellow-warriors. He was spontaneously respected by all of the children of Misi Saljong.

In the meantime, the proud owl, Do'kupa Mikrimilthong had hitherto achieved nothing worthy of note. His boastful words were hollow and his life was blank. All that was talked about his immense reserve power, his monopoly of gifts and his high-sounding prates of his future achievement, proved to be so much abracadabra. So, no one of his race paid any more

respects to him. Feeling ashamed of himself before Khorengpa Khobinpa, who by sheer force of his merit, rose to glory from obscurity, the proud owl hid himself far from the busy haunts of his race in daylight and used to come out into the open world only at nights.

—*Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.*

THE OWL AND THE COBRA

Once upon a time in very, very ancient days, Do'kupa Mikr-miltong Sa'nepa Skodottong,¹ the patriarchal head of the owls, carried off a young cobra to his nest for food for his owlets. The mother cobra de capello who was roving about nearby saw her offspring wafted high up in the air in the talons of the patriarchal owl and followed the flight of the bird with her eyes. On the spot she vowed vengeance saying :

"I'll go to his nest when he falls fast asleep and swallow up his owlets. I'll kill the parent owls outright."

Thereupon the cobra approached the tree in which the owls had built their nest. The patriarch flew down to meet her and asked :

"What business have you in coming here?"

"You have stolen away my son. It is to avenge myself on you and on your brood that I have come," answered the mother cobra de capello angrily.

"If you come to fight against me in open warfare, you'll be fighting a losing battle," said the patriarchal owl, surveying the mother cobra de capello coldly.

"I'll wait here for any length of time on the ground for an opportune moment to attack you," remonstrated the cobra. "There is a time for everything, a time for waking, a time for sleeping. Surely there must be a time when you are all fast asleep. I'll wait for that hour, whether it be in the garish light of day or the dead of night. Then I'll kill you and your owlets and swallow up the lot of you in revenge for the loss of my son. If you think that you have a right to devour my offspring, why, why should I not have the same right to eat up you and your abominable brood?"

"There's no use bandying words," replied the patriarchal owl. "It is action that counts. If, in the struggle for one's right, he goes under, he is no longer fit to exist in the world. Craven-hearted races do not inherit the earth."

"The point of the matter is that you will be killed while you are asleep," insisted the mother cobra.

"You talk of sleep," went on the owl huffily. "Well and good. Now, what is sleep? As all the world knows, when we sleep we are almost as good as dead; we relax our consciousness; we lie dormantly inactive and perfectly *silent*. Is that not so?"

The mother cobra de capello nodded a haughty affirmative. "Well," continued the patriarchal owl, "I am afraid you'll be able to destroy us all. We are in deep sleep when we are silent as are all other creatures. And, as everyone knows, we hoot and howl when we are awake."

"Of course," answered the cobra, "It is then that I'll perform my revenge."

"Then I and my family will doubtlessly perish," moaned the patriarchal owl in mock earnestness, as he flew up to his nest under pretence of deep anxiety. There he laughed quietly to himself, saying: "Ha, ha, ha. As a matter of fact, it is when we are silent that we are wide-awake. When we hoot and howl, we are on the verge of sleep. Ha, ha, ha. The world is deeply ignorant of the fact that, unlike other creatures, when we emit intermittent howls, like: hou, hou, hou,...hou, hou, hou, hou,... We are soundly asleep."

According to her mistaken idea that owls sleep when they are silent, the mother cobra de capello climbed up the tree to the nest of the patriarchal owl in the dead of night when the owl was quiet and apparently asleep. He, however, was wide awake and waiting for the snake. In the twinkling of an eye he dealt so tremendous a blow on the head of the cobra with his sharp, crooked beak that the vengeance-seeking snake tumbled to the ground where it landed with a heavy thud, crashing out its life. For a while it squirmed about and then lay dead still. It later served as food for the owl and his brood for several days.

—Told by Shanon Shangma Tegitdi
at Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.

KALKAME KALGRA (THE GOD OF DESTINY)

Kalkame Kalgra was the younger matrilineal brother of Goera, the god of Thunder and Lightning, his mother being the younger sister of Goera's mother. Kalkame Kalgra's mother was known as Sime Ranje and his father as Rikro Tamang. His nieces were respectively called Kalmedoh-olbik and Rume Simik.

One day the nieces of Kalkame Kalgra saw Nahma Suangpa Nahsa Badanpa, the patriarchal head of fish, in the pool of Ambarani Chijo Gambareni Dekgo. They told Kalkame Kalgra about it and he answered :

"Let us surround the pool and bale out the water in order to catch the patriarchal fish. Let me go in search of the slender *makkal* tree (*milletia Pachycarpa*) first wherewith we shall poison the fish. Meanwhile, you can get dinner ready for the three of us at the confluence of the streams beyond Dambo."

With these words he left his nieces alone and went away in search of the slender-stemmed *makkal* tree. He found one growing luxuriantly in the rubbish heap of Bone Janepa. Kalkame Kalgra cut off a branch of it and set out on his return journey. Now, during his absence, Okbongjada Wakewanel, the spendthrift son of Durama Imbama, came wandering over the hills and through the deep dark ravines until he finally arrived at the spot where Kalmedoh-olbik and Rume Simik were waiting for their maternal uncle. Okbongjada sprang upon the two maidens, gagged them and carried them off to the house of Durama Imbama, his mother.

When Kalkame Kalgra came to the rendezvous, he was deeply grieved at not finding his nieces. He could not understand what had become of them and was at a loss as to what to do. In his uncertainty he threw away the *makkal* branch and wandered haphazardly to the abode of Durama Imbama with a view to seeking her maternal assistance. This woman was a giantess among gods and goddesses, having boundless wealth and possessions of her own. Her riches could not be diminished in spite of the repeated attempts of her matrilineal-sisters Koasi

Minduri and Ahratcha Rongbare to squander it away. Their orgies of loot and plunder could create no notable decrease in Durama Imbama's vast riches and immense possessions. At that time the rich goddess was settling in Simsang Rikam Rongdong Bra.¹ Her father was called Aringrang Diringrang and her mother was named Rejing Reja. Her daughter was known as Rutrebang Rebangbangjang, whose husband was named Bokringmeh-a Baling-Phante.

Durama Imbama warmly welcomed Kalkame Kalgra and treated him as a son. She offered him the best liquor and rice-beer and provided him with the best white rice and pork curry prepared from castrated pigs with white sides. Soon Kalkame Kalgra felt much at home. Durama Imbama besought her guest not to go into the inner rooms as he might be severely attacked by the venomous insects that lurked there in swarms. This did not daunt Kalkame Kalgra, who, overriding her behest, boldly penetrated the inner rooms of the house. By and by in an obscure corner of one of these rooms, he came upon the putrefied bodies of Kalmedoh-olbik and Rume Simik. Kalkame Kalgra was horrified at the gruesome spectacle. Calmly and quietly he knelt down and scrutinized the spectral jaws and rotting bones of what were once his two beloved nieces. Tears streamed down his cheeks as he said to himself :

"Alas, this is what Durama Imbama has done to my beloved nieces. I will wreak vengeance on her for this foul deed."

In reality it was the son of the goddess, Okbongjada Wakowanel, who had abducted the beautiful maidens to the house of his mother and devoured them there.

To carry out his plan for revenge Kalkame Kalgra instantly left the house of Durama Imbama in great bitterness. He journeyed to the east in quest of bow and arrows and at last came to the country of Ahsong Nongrengreng Chiga Nengchi-ting,² which was lorded over by Mehgam Sildareng, the famous armourer of gods and men. The latter welcomed the wanderer with great kindness and made him comfortable in his house. Both of them became the best of friends. Kalkame Kalgra sojourned in the place for a long while and made friends with thousands of the lord's vassals. In the meantime the armourer himself was dilligently preparing his bow and arrows. When it was finally finished he handed them over to his guest and said :

"This weapon is of the highest calibre. Go and wield it against the treacherous giantess with good effect."

Kalkame Kalgra equipped himself with his new weapons and started off for his own country. Before his departure, Mehgam Sildareng gave him a grand feast in which he was served the best kind of rice, the best extract of rice-beer, and the best of curry. At the moment of his taking leave Mehgam Sildareng gave Kalkame Kalgra some cooked rice and curry prepared from pork and capon for his noonday meal. He advised the traveller not to return home along the ridge of high hills nor to enter a particular house on one of the hill-tops for rest. Then the two friends parted company.

Now, Kalkame Kalgra being of an adventurous and devilish nature did not heed the advice of his friend the armourer. He trod the hilly heights and at last came to a pleasant house on a hill top which commanded a splendid view in all directions. In truth this was the home of Okbongjada Wakewanel. He received the visitor with apparent warmth and begged him to rest for a while. At heart, however, he was still the same treacherous son of Durama Imbama. In a moment he adroitly took out the cooked rice and curry from the traveller's provisions and put in their place roasted monitor-lizards and dead chameleons. He also filched some valuable souvenirs from his guest's equipment and concealed them in his house.

After a time Kalkame Kalgra set out once more for his homeward journey. He bade farewell to Okbongjada Wakewanel and went away without inspecting his travelling outfit. On the way he stopped to take his midday meal and found the loathsome roasted monitor-lizards and dead chameleons. He also discovered some of his valuables gone. At this Kalkame Kalgra expressly accused Mehgam Sildareng of the insidious insult and felt intensely disgusted with him. So, he decided that before launching his attack upon Durama Imbama, he would first wage war against Mehgam Sildareng and his people.

Kalkame Kalgra attacked the subjects of Mehgam Sildareng, shooting his arrows into the armpits of hundreds of them. In this way he waged war against the donor of his formidable weapons using them to slay the armourer's faithful subjects. At this the armourer and his remaining people grew furious and counter-attacked the ungrateful assailant. They prepared

their rectangular shields and sharpened their *milams* on corundum stones to mow down their common foe. At this Kalkame Kalgra hastened down to the seventh level of the subterranean region and drove up seven legions of sparrows so that the myriad of birds might lay waste to the paddy fields of Mehgam Sildareng and his confederates. In this way he planned to dispose of his foes singly as they went to their fields to get rid of the feathered plunderers.

Mehgam Sildareng and hundreds of thousands of his people went to Ahsong Mongmrag Chiga Konggrang Taugrimchong, Songbong Gimaram in the country of Dambo Ahdok, from whence they schemed to conduct operations against Kalkame Kalgra. While they were crossing en masse a bridge over the pool of Ambareni Chicho Gambareni Dekdo, the leader of the corps ordered :

"Do not cut leeches on the bridge ; nor beat flies on it."

However, a deaf warrior in the rear was unable to hear this order, so he cut leeches and beat flies on the bridge and it plunged suddenly into the deep with Mehgam Sildareng and all his followers on it. They were all drowned. This bridge was in reality the body of Menpa Rongdingpa, the patriarchal head of the giant aquatic serpents, known as *sangkinnies*, and of the pythons.

When Kalkame Kalgra beheld his enemies perishing, he cried out in victory. Menpa Rongdingpa heard his exultant shouts and was disturbed. He said to himself :

"How is it that Kalkame Kalgra brags of his victory and utters pompous hurrahs ? Does he not deliberately bring discredit on me ? What an ungrateful being he really is !"

From that time Menpa Rongdingpa was accustomed to surreptitiously swallow eggs, young chickens and pigs. At this Kalkame Kalgra took his bow and arrows with him and stalked Menpa Rongdingpa, walking on tiptoe to Snal Ahriku Patah Rongriku⁴ where he knelt down and discharged his darts at the venomous snake. Menpa Rongdingpa reeled with pain and floundered into the deep pools below. Nahma Suangpa Nehsa Badanpa, the nephew of the patriarchal head of the *sangkinnies* and pythons, said to himself :

"Alas, my aged uncle whose grey hairs I used to pluck out and whose scabby back I used to scratch has been

driven out of this place. He who is my friend, patron and guide has been severely wounded. Why should I remain here any longer?"

So Nahma Suangpa Nahsa Badanpa Rimrong, the patriarchal head of fishes, left his accustomed abode and followed his uncle's tracks.

Now, soon after Kalkame Kalgra carried on a single-handed assault against Durama Imbama on the terrestrial surface. However, just before the conclusion of the war, at the time when his elder brother Goerad went up to heaven Kalkame Kalgra sank into the earth and made his abode there. He is now recognized as the spirit who holds in his hands the lives of man and other living beings. The life of living things are lost or taken by others only by his acquiescence. Durama Imbama is still afraid of him and restrains her sons and servants from reckless waste of life. Tigers, elephants and other wild beasts are able to kill only those beings whom Kalkame Kalgra has given over to them on particular days and nights in particular places according to the injunctions of Dingipa Dakgipa Bahbra.⁵

To the Achiks, Kalkame Kalgra is the personal demon or guardian spirit of all human beings and other living things. A sacrificial ceremony, known as Ahsongtata or Ahsongkrita⁶ is performed by the Achiks once a year in honour of Kalkame Kalgra. At this time prayers are offered to him to keep them safe from all dangers of the forests, deadly illnesses and fatal accidents during the course of the coming year.

—Told by Totin Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

THE BARKING DEER

Once upon a time, two patriarchs, respectively named Do'kupa Sa'nepa and Urengsi Urengmal, settled together at a certain place, known as Gabilma Kindri Suunma Chapchare Daram Dasing Rakka Gands. One day these two patriarchs together went to the market at Wakchibri Tengandri Dimilbri Phalwangahding.

While they were starting together to the market Do'kupa Sahnepa said, "I will bring home commodities and domestic animals in six basketfuls." Urgengsi Urengmal also said, "I shall return home from the market, bringing eight baskets filled with commodities and domestic animals."

Urengsi Urengmal bought all necessary articles and domestic animals at the market as he intended and started to return home. While the business of selling and buying was in full swing, Ro'kupa Sa'nepa took his rest and fell fast asleep under the cool shade of the *me'gong* tree (*Bauhinia variegata*). He woke up just as the business activities at the market-place were almost over. He haphazardly sought for any article worth purchasing and at last found only one *kokchok* (loosely-plaited basket), one small *adil dobret* (small trumpet made of buffalo horn) and one *kram nangkildik* (oblong-shaped tomtom). He avidly bought up these three articles.

Carrying with him those three things, Do'kupa Sa'nepa started to come back home. Making short cuts by the hill-passes and through deep rugged ravines, he reached his village earlier, and told lies to Gaging Gare, the wife of Urengsi Urengmal, saying : "Your husband is lying dead in the market-place. His body is emitting stench and maggots are wriggling all over it. Prepare funeral ceremony for your deceased husband."

Gaging Gare readily swallowed the story of her husband's death and earnestly began to perform all necessary customary funeral ceremonial performances over her beloved husband. Just at the time when his wife was busy with the funeral paraphernalia on him, Urengsi Urengmal suddenly arrived at home, bringing all the articles and domestic animals with him in his basket.

Urengsi Urengmal asked his wife what she meant with all the funeral paraphernalia. She replied, "Do'kupa Sa'nepa told me that you lay dead in the market-place and that your body was already in a state of decomposition. Out of my true love and devotion, I have just begun to perform all the customary funeral performances over you."

At these words, Urengsi Urengmal was beside himself with rage and angrily said to her, "In doing all these things you but wish me really dead and gone. You have been just playing with my soul and dignity. I can no longer stand all this nonsense. I can no longer stay with you."

Wildly dropping down all the articles which he brought with him, he hastily left home and his wife and wandered away towards Jankre. Presuming that his wife might follow him, he deliberately sabotaged the bridge, which lay over Rangram-bri Ahabolhol. Gajing Gare hysterically ran after her husband, crying, "Angse, Khawa, stay a while. Oh, just look at me."

As she unwittingly crossed the damaged bridge, it gave way beneath her weight and she was drowned in the swirling water below. Her body was carried away by the strong surging current of water.

Urengsi Urengmal composed himself and calmly reflected on the gravity of his rash action. He retraced his way towards his home-land and found that his wife was drowned beneath the broken bridge. He employed his two younger sisters, respectively named Noonggit and Nothonggit, in searching for his wife's body. These two sisters took up their *chekkes* (rectangular fishing baskets) with them and scoured down the river, beginning at Rahamala Rajajoldonggre. At last, they partially recovered her bones from Jangkre Bechanchi and handed them over to Urengsi Urengmal.

Urengsi Urengmal had now decided to get his wife remoulded out of the recovered bones. Certain parts of her bones were still missing. In order to make up the deficiency, he took up the bones of one leg of a dead barking deer (muntjac) and also some pieces of *Ajaju*, a kneeless carnivorous monster, having twelve forked tongues, mixed them well with the bones of his wife and carried them to Mehgam Dalgipa Mande Chu'gipa, who lived at A'song Jagring Chiga Mandini A'song Ahadidi Chiga Agilmongsi and begged him to remould his wife out of the bones.

Mehgam Dalgipa complied with his requests and remodelled and recreated Gajing Gare out of the bones. Gajing Gare became a fresh living human being once more. Mehgam Dalgipa said to Ürengsi Ürengmal :

"Now take your re-embodied wife and go home in peace. Take her tenderly and lovingly. By any means, do not take rest under the shade of the *chirori* tree (*Terminalia belerica*) and the like on your home."

Ürengsi Ürengmal took his freshly re-created wife and trecked his way back home along with her. On the way his re-incarnated wife felt weary and hungry, and so, she begged her husband to take rest for a while. Unwittingly they took rest under the shade of a *chirori* tree. The newly re-created wife, unable to bear the pangs of hunger, stealthily picked up some *chirori* fruits that lay scattered on the ground and ate them up. In a jiffy, the re-incarnated woman began to be metamorphosed into a female barking deer. As her husband patted her on the back, saying, "Come, let us go home, dearie," she uttered "hop, hop, hop" and "my Mother," and bounced away into the jungle.

The female barking-deer was afterwards called Chinetokke. She remained a barking-deer for ever.

Ever since, the Achiks believe that it is a taboo or bad luck when one hears the barking deer bark "hop.....hop.....hop....." at the time of starting from home for some business or work.

—Told by Alasing Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

THE FIREFLY AND THE DUNG BEETLE

Long, long ago, when the world was very young, the lower animals freely enjoyed the society of each other in perfect harmony. Even men and gods dwelt at peace with animals in the blessed age. Community life appeared a homogeneous whole notwithstanding the heterogeneous nature of its members. When one had some onerous work to perform, other than the ordinary duties of life, he could freely call upon the assistance of his friends and neighbours and voluntarily receive their prompt co-operation. His only obligation in this matter was one of common courtesy, namely, that of providing refreshments for his co-workers during the day and some entertainment at night. When others required his aid, he had to be ready to offer it gladly and freely. However, these obligations were by no means compulsory, but in the course of time, these ordinary acts of courtesy and helpfulness formed part of the social code of the time, having gained the consensus of opinion as being quite feasible and allowing very little room for divergence. Paying remuneration for such services in the form of money and valuables was then utterly unknown. All was done strictly on a communal basis.

Now, in this age, there was a firefly and a dung-beetle who had plighted everlasting friendship towards each other. The former was then an ordinary tawny insect with no luminosity in his body. The dung-beetle, on the contrary, was one of the most beautiful of insects with resplendent wings and glowing head. The two lived in separate villages not very far from each other.

One day a demi-god named Jane-Gandophang asked them to help him in the construction of his house. The firefly and the dung-beetle gladly lent their assistance and finished the job in one day. In the evening Jane-Gandophang gave them a grand feast in which all sorts of luscious food and rare wine flowed freely. The two ate and drank until late at night. When the time of departure came, they discovered that it was pitch dark. Jane-Gandophang then offered them torches to help them find their ways home in the darkness.

At once the firefly gladly accepted the torch. The dung-beetle, on the contrary, said that he did not want any; for he could find his way home well enough. He added that he could

accompany the firefly for a good part of the distance; and then he would manage to get home safely as he knew all the by-paths leading to his village. So he did not accept the proffered torch.

The firefly and dung-beetle then wended their way home in the inky darkness, the former securely carrying his bright torch; the latter following close behind. By and by they came to the parting of the ways from which each would make his own way to his respective home. The firefly guided by the light he carried reached his house without any mishap or inconvenience. Ever since that time the firefly possesses the luminosity which was given him on that dark night.

Meanwhile, the dung-beetle groped his way painfully in the darkness and wandered aimlessly hither and thither the whole night long. Often he ran against rocks and tree stumps and received many severe and hard knocks. Not infrequently he missed his footing and floundered helplessly over many uneven and filthy places. Totally exhausted with fatigue, he at last grew dizzy in no small degree and sat down on a piece of log close to a dung heap. His faintness increased and he finally tumbled over unconsciously into the dung heap swallowed some of the filth in his sleep, thinking it to be luscious food. It is often the nature of dreams to go by contraries. At daybreak he awoke and found himself eating the filthy dung. He saw that his wretched body was covered all over with innumerable bruises and wounds and that his forehead and lips were painfully swollen. In desperation, he made one more attempt to find his way home. As a result of all the physical difficulties he had undergone during the night, his body was so completely transformed that his family and neighbours did not recognise him at all. They took the hideous looking spectacle to be some mad creature and raised a hue and cry against him before he could utter one word in self-defence. All the villagers congregated and drove him out of the place, away from his own homestead.

This is how the dung-beetle came to live on dung and its upper-lip came to protrude over its lower one. This is also the reason why the wretched insect has come to lead a solitary life of its own ever since that fatal dark night.

—Told by Remba Marak Chada
at Village Chunitolu, District Sylhet, Pakistan

THE HULUK APES

The arboreal inhabitants, now known as huluk apes, were once a martial tribe of human beings. One day the brave warriors of this tribe went out to fight their common foe known as Wah Wohting Choga. The valiant enemy offered them sturdy resistance and fought with all his might. The battle was long and bloody; but Wah Wohting Choga was eventually defeated. His head was hacked off and all his confederates killed. They, too, were decapitated by the conquerors and their heads carried away as trophies.

While the victors, in full panoply of war, were returning home bearing the heads of their beaten enemies, they came upon a *tehcra* tree (*garnicia cowa*) whose branches were laden with ripe, mellow fruit. Their mouths watered at the sight of the enticing fruit and they felt an irresistible craving to partake of it. So they put down their weapons and trophies at the foot of the tree, climbed it, and began to pluck the fruit to satisfy their appetites.

By this indiscreet action the conquerors failed in their duty towards the gods. For, after any victory, it was the first and foremost duty of the victors to perform sacrificial offerings of thanksgiving to the tutelary god, Salgra, before laying down their arms for festivities. It was also a sacrilege to taste anything on such occasion until the thanksgiving rites were completed. So, as they sat on the leafy branches enjoying the fruit of the tree to their heart's content, Salgra himself, simmering with just anger and wounded pride at the impudence of the warriors, suddenly appeared before them and glared wrathfully at them. He severely reprimanded them for their failure to perform the essential sacrificial offering for their recent victory. In bitter disgust at their delinquency and sacrilege, Salgra cursed the offending victors, saying :

"Let you and your descendants remain on trees henceforth, eating the fruits thereof and never walking again like men."

In dazed smartness under the curse, the offenders felt their bodies being transformed. Through their own sudden strong

feeling of self-repulsion that they had been guilty of the blackest sin, their bodies actually became jet black. Afterwards, their wives came and joined them in the trees. The females, retaining the original reddish-white colour of their bodies, remained with their afflicted husbands. Their descendnats still continue to dwell in the woods of Achik Ahsong as the hapless race of huluk apes. From time to time, they are heard to cry out boisterously,

“Wah, wah, wah, Choga, Choga, Choga, Wohting Choga, Choga.”

—Told by *Gontjink Marak Raksam*,
at *Durang Dura*, District Garo Hills

THE BIRTH OF FIRE AND THE AFTERMATH

In the beginning the supreme god, who was known to the Achiks by the names of Dakgipa Rugipa, Tattara Rabuga, Stura Phanthura, Mahgipa Jagring, Suulgipa Yubanggipa, Janggin Nokgipa, Jamni Biambi,¹ commanded the lesser spirits under him to make the world. Thus the fashioning of the earth was assigned to Nosthu Nophanthu² and Misi Sihste.³ In this way he allotted specific tasks to different spirits.

Norekbak Norekdim was a goddess on whom was bestowed the power of giving birth to various gods and different species of living beings, man excepted. She was known by seven particular pairs of names. However, she was not the common mother of man, as the latter had a common mother of his own.

Norekbak Norekdim⁴ gave birth to Salgra,⁵ the sun-god, known as Aijanga.⁶ She was then called Worimjak Nosiksak. Next she gave birth to Misi Susime,⁷ the goddess of Fortune and Giver of Riches, known as Redingbanda.⁸ At that time the mother was called Susimema Sangkildoma.⁹

Once when Salgra and Susime were small children, they quarrelled bitterly over their childish selection of prospective bride and bridegroom. Misi Susime was of a maudlin and melancholic turn of mind; while Salgra was clever and cheerful. Their mother was away from the house at the time. So, in the course of their quarrel they splashed slushy, viscous wax from the dammer bee (*melipona*) on each other. Salgra at once went to the riverside and washed the splattered wax from his body. Misi Susime, however, would not wash her wax off. She said ruefully :

"Let mother come and see what Salgra has done to me. I will tell her how he has abused me. Then she will beat him."

In the evening the mother came home and scolded Misi Susime for not washing the wax off her body. She sent her to a nearby stream to perform the task. There Misi Susime tried her best to wash away the sticky wax; but without success. No matter how hard she tried, the wax stuck firmly to her body. Misi Susime is now represented by the moon and Salgra by the sun.

Norekbak Norekdim gave birth to various gods and goddesses and living beings such as the huluk apes, other arboreal inhabitants, various sorts of animals, birds, reptiles and insects. She was then called Asima Dingsima.¹⁰ Later she gave birth to the mother of grass, trees, bamboos, plants and herbs. Then she was called Dramma Chisamma Denpema Denjoma.¹¹

Afterwards Misi Susime said to her: "Mother, you have given birth to gods, goddesses, various living beings, plants and herbs. Why not give birth to Fire, Mother?" The giver of life said that she would try.

While Norekbak Norakdim was conceiving Fire, she attended the orbit of Rabpgma Ranggama¹² the first goddess who had tasted death. At the funeral ceremony she accidentally stumbled over some lumber that had been brought there for the purpose of erecting a funeral pyre. She immediately went home and gave birth to Fire. At that time she was called Urenchima Urendama.¹³

The new-born baby was given the name of Sretonggitchak Gitokwahrikkat.¹⁴ While she was giving birth to it, Norekbak Norekdim died at Damsimi Samsimeri Boltotru Chameragu. At this her first daughter, Misi Susime, got very angry with the Fire-baby, picked it up, and hurled it far beyond the terrestrial region. The baby fell into one of the subterranean regions known as Bre Nalsa Rado Chichang.¹⁵

The body of Norekbak Norekdim lay in state on a bed in her house. At that time there were no mats in the world. So, Misi Susime sent one of her servants, named Mikadaap Jahathongkap,¹⁶ to the subterranean region to bring a mat. Accordingly the servant went down to the seventh level of the subterranean world, bought a mat from Ahning Dimapa Chining Dimsapa alias Jogoracha¹⁷ with a valuable gong, and brought it back to his mistress. The body of the deceased was then laid on the mat. This was the first time in the world that a corpse was laid on a mat at home before disposal. Next, Misi Susime tied two cocks to the toes of her dead mother's feet and caused them to fight each other. These cocks are now represented by the constellation called *Dohsutot*. Some tail feathers of other cocks were placed as plumes on the corpse's head. These are now represented by comets.

Great preparations were in full swing for the funeral cere-

monies. Two beautiful ladies, known as Chapchore and Nonje Janje, came to attend them. They wore very beautiful garments which so pleased Misi Susime that she changed them into two beautiful stars, known as Castor and Pollux.

As the Fire-baby had been ruthlessly thrown beyond the terrestrial region, he would not come back to earth even to attend the funeral ceremonies of his mother. His other brothers and sisters all insisted that he should be brought back. Unable to bear their importunities any longer, Misi Susime sent Gingbo Salle Itcha Rengshin, the patriarchal head of the aquatic lizards or alligators, to the place where the Fire-baby was hurled in order to fetch him back. As he was bringing the child home he had to cross Sagalma Acma Ditema, the mother of the oceans. Gingbo Sallo put the child on his back as he crossed the oceans. This caused that portion of his body to be severely burnt by the Fire-baby, so he lowered himself into the water to cool off. As he did, the Fire-baby made good his escape and returned to his accustomed abode. Gingo Sallo remained ever in the water. His descendants are now known as water-lizards or alligators. As a result of the burns received on the back of their patriarchal ancestor at that time, the backs of alligators or water-lizards are even now striped and their tails notched.

Next Matchak Rosiksak,¹⁹ the patriarchal head of the squirrels, was sent to fetch the Fire-baby. He carried the baby back on his tail. As he was crossing the mother of oceans, he dipped his tail occasionally to cool it off, and, after leaping from rock to rock, he would lower his tail in the water thus ducking the Fire-baby every time. This annoyed the baby after much repetition, so he returned angrily to his accustomed abode. As a result of the singeing it received in carrying the Fire-baby, the tail of the squirrel remains reddish up to this very day.

It was soon discovered that life on earth was hardly possible without Fire. So, Misi Susime sent her younger brother, Khat-chi Biari, to bring back the Fire-baby. He tried his best to fetch his baby-brother, but without success. To all his pleas the Fire-baby remained adamant. Finally it said :

"Our sister Misi Susime has thrown me away. I do not wish to go back to earth. However, I will send a servant of mine in my place. So, if you really want me to be present among you, simply rub bamboo sticks against each other

and rub pieces of flint against one another. Then you will detect my servant. He will dwell among you innate in the dry materials which you daily use. He will do for you all that you would wish me to do."

Katchi Biari went back to the terrestrial region and gave the Fire-baby's message to all assembled for the funeral ceremonies of Susimema Sangkildoma. So people obtained fire by rubbing bamboo sticks against each other, which process is called *wahle raa*²⁰; they also obtained it by striking together two pieces of flint, which procedure is named *wahltot tota*.²¹ And so they were finally able to cremate the body of the mother of all living beings, animals, herbs, gods, and goddesses, excepting man, on a huge funeral pyre. This pyre is now represented in the sky by Mangganchi (the square Pegasus). The bearing of the body to the funeral place is represented in the heavens by Mangripe (Cassiopeia).

Misi Susime's uncle bought a buffalo from Bamin Racha Sojon Gital²² to offer as a sacrifice to the deceased at the funeral ceremonies. As the animal approached the house of death, it became frightened at the sound of the beating of tom-toms, the clashing of gongs, the blasting of horns, and the general carousing of all those assembled at the place. The man who was leading the bull signalled to the people to stop the noise; but they mistook his signal to mean Make more noise; so they beat and clanged and blasted and shouted until the poor buffalo became terrified at the din, broke away from his retainer and galloped off for sweet life. The marks of his hoofs are represented in the sky as *matma jahkhol*.²³

A cow was next purchased from Bamin Racha Sojon Gital to be used as the sacrificial offering in the place of the escaped buffalo. This animal had previously been a man named Asreng Meh-a Dingsreng Phante. As such he joined the funeral ceremonies, took the leading part in drinking liquor, and was the one who a little before had told the people to make more and more noise. Finally, his nephew tied him to the funeral post. The victim looked like a man distraught and slowly assumed the appearance of a cow. When the time came for offering the sacrifice, this cow was struck twice on the neck with a mighty *milam* (two-edged sword). At the first blow, he bellowed like a bull.

A pig was also brought to be offered as a sacrifice. The carrying of the pig is now represented in the sky by *Wakripe*. Some small children saw the pig being borne to the place of sacrifice and playfully represented the scene by carrying a cat in imitation. This action of the children is represented in the sky by a constellation, known as *Menggoripe*.²⁴

Now, at that time the world was very young and all living beings could talk like men. So different tasks at the funeral ceremonies were allotted to different beings. The Bhimraz had to pound rice into flour for preparing curry. He worked so hard that his hands blistered. Dengropa Dengchoma, the patriarchal head of the shell-less horned snail and the inhabitant of Mehgadop Samarop Wahambong Wahthimbong,²⁵ had to dress beef and pork. He was wise, good-looking and a clever sculptor as well. It was to him that the task of carving wood to be used as props for the funeral pyre was also allotted. He too, carved the memorial posts for the deceased. These last were designed after the snail's own image and were approved by all present. The Achiks, following the example of Dengropa Dengchoma, carve memorial posts known as *kimas* up to this very day. The *kimas* are designed in the shape of the shell-less snail, known as *gap*, to the memory of the dead and are placed in front of the houses of the Achiks as signal posts to the departed spirits seeking to be reborn into the same motherhood.

At the end of the funeral ceremonies of Susimema Sangkildoma, Dengchoma said :

"We 've had a lot to eat and drink ; but we did not get any *kitmaginechi*."

Kitmaginechi is the powdered bran of sour fruits of a certain tropical tree known as *kitma* (*Rhus semialata*). It was rare at that time ; though now the tree is found plentifully in the jungles of Achik Ahsong.

The relatives of the deceased got very angry with Dengropa Dengchoma for his indecorous murmuring of dissatisfaction in public after they had done everything to the best of their ability in order to assure the comfort and satisfaction of all present. They irritably retorted :

"How much more would you eat ? Haven't we given you ample food and drink ?"

They then dragged him forcibly to the place of slaughter

where he was accustomed to dress beef and pork, smeared grease and fat all over his body, beat and kicked him severely, and then set him free. The fat could not be washed off. It stuck to his body permanently. That is the reason why the shell-less horned snail remains fatty up to this very day. What appear to be its horns are nothing more than its feelers.

Now, Dohkapa Jahchang Amakpa Gengdang, the patriarchal head of the ravens, was employed in cleansing the cooking pots and other utensils during the funeral ceremonies. His body was thus besmirched with greasy fat and soot which could not be washed off. This is the reason why ravens remain jet black up to this very day. Again, the leopard was employed in drawing water for use during the funeral ceremonies. In the competitions which took place during the funeral festivities, the crow was the first being to shoot an arrow. He missed the target completely and accidentally hit a man who chased him angrily with an arrow in his hand. From that time crows have been dreadfully afraid of bows and arrows.

During the post-funeral ceremonies, which were performed three times, all the living beings who were present smeared black soot on one another's face in play. It was the male huluk ape who first bespattered his own face himself and then went about blackening the faces of other beings. The soot could not be washed off; and so his face remained black permanently and all those who were smeared with soot on this occasion remained black for good.

The long-tailed brown langur monkeys were busy as cooks during the post-funeral ceremony. Due to the soot stains then received, their palms, fingers and faces have remained blackened up to this very day. The cricket at this time was the first to chant mourning songs for the dead mother. The tiny insect wore a new shoot of the plantain tree as her petticoat. When she went to sit down, the petticoat became torn and the embarrassed cricket left the place in shame, despite Misi Susime's entreaties that she should stay on. The dung-beetle was the first to blow horns during the festivities. And so, in this manner, different beings took different parts in the funeral performances according to the custom of the age.

While every other living being was busily engaged in one capacity or another during the funeral festivities, the bushy-tailed

squirrel remained inactive. He was sprightly, but lazy and very fond of food and drink. He drank much; then got up and danced hither and yon in merry spree. He danced to the place where the butchers were busily dressing beef and pork. The squirrel danced on intoxicatedly near the dangerous spot. Accidentally the tip of his tail was nipped off by a butcher and the squirrel's body spattered with his own blood. But he continued to dance on as if nothing had happened. As a result of the blood stains which the drunken squirrel received on that date, his descendants' bodies have retained a reddish colour up to this very day.

During the height of the noisy merry-making on this occasion. Salgra concealed his wife inside a strong room of his house so that no one could blacken her face or body with soot. However, a young being, named Waekmeh-a Wachek Pante,²⁶ was secretly instructed by Misi Susime how to get into the strong room. Accordingly, the youth entered the house and smeared soot on the body of Salgra's wife while she was asleep. Later Salgra discovered from his wife the name of the culprit and was furious with anger against him. Thereupon he sent Gingbo Sallo Itcha Rengsin to punish the miscreant.

Gingbo Sallo, the servant of Salgra, set out in search of Waekmeh-a. The latter ran on and tried to conceal himself inside caves, rocks, hollow trunks of trees and dried wood. But everywhere he was ferreted out by his pursuer. Waekmeh-a ran towards the East and took refuge in Siram Racha Rolking Nokma,²⁷ but was discovered. He concealed himself in Agitchak Rongbare, Misirong, Kimkharrong, Maadi Rongkuchi, Mangshang Ahsong, Darang Petchong, Papera, Koasi, Minduri²⁸ and many other places. But no matter where he concealed himself, Gingbo Sallo always found him. At last the fugitive fled to Kalika Mogua,²⁹ concealed himself inside a strong subterranean cave and thus saved himself. The pursuer then returned home. The descendants of Waekmeh-a are the bats.

A stone was obtained from the Koasi Hill to put as *krom* over the burial place of the deceased's bones. An image of clay in the form of man, to which malarial fever was made to pass by the exorcisms of the Rikra brothers³⁰ and the Matcha uncles,³¹ was set up in the open courtyard where the funeral ceremonies had been going on. The image began to move its lips and talk: It

could answer all questions put to it. All the animals, reptiles, rodents, flying and crawling insects who were present at the funeral convivialities, amused themselves by imitating the speech of the image of clay; and soon they themselves began to talk like men.

It was Salgra who saw the necessity of man's killing animals and other beings for food. He mused :

"If all living beings are able to talk like men to one another and to the gods and men alike, each will say, Don't kill me; kill the other fellow when necessity arises for men and gods to kill."

Whereof, he shut the mouths of all animals, reptiles, rodents, birds and insects. This is the reason why they cannot talk like men nowadays.

—Told by Alasingh Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

THE ORIGIN OF THE RICE-BEER FERMENT

In the days of yore there was no rice-beer or liquor of any kind for people to drink. The brewing of alcoholic beverages was unknown because the ferment was not yet discovered. It was Tiebangshi Misi Noebale¹ who first invented beer-ferment or yeast. It was then passed on to Tiranni Rangsilchi² and Suengma Tottengma,³ from whom Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare Nore Chire⁴ got it. She kept it packed up in leaves with rice bran on a raised courtyard in the rear of her house in the subterranean region. Khorengpa Khobinpa Ganggipok Chidual⁵ stole the packet of ferment and rice bran from her courtyard and brought it to the terrestrial surface and kept it on the top of a gigantic simul tree (*bombax malabaricum*).

An Achik woman named Elongga Elonggi, the ancient matriarch of Mehgam Nongstyng⁶ espied the packet of ferment on the simul tree near her house, felled the tree and obtained the packet. As the tree struck the ground particles of ferment were thrown far and wide. This is the reason why we find vegetable growth to which fermentation is due.

Elongga Ellonggi introduced the ferment to the rest of mankind. Ever since that time people have been able to brew rice-beer by the use of ferment. Later fermented beverages came to be prepared out of millet, corn, Job's tears, and certain roots and fruits.

—Told by Jorang Shangma Snal
at Awangga, District Garo Hills.

DEJAN AND THE MATCHADU

Once in the olden days a party of ten men from an ancient village in Achik Ahsong started forth for a market which was a two days' journey's distance away. Each of them carried a basketful of raw cotton to sell and took some rice, salt, dried fish and chillies for their meals on the way. At the end of the first day's journey they found themselves benighted in an old village, the inhabitants of which were all residing in their shanties in their *jhum* fields in order to watch over their ripening crops.

The party of ten made preparations to lodge in an old dingy *Nokphanthe* (bachelor's house) for the night. They put down their baskets of cotton, cooked their meal on the hearth of the *Nokphanthe*, and had a frugal supper. Afterwards they lay down in a row on the porch of the house to sleep. One of them at that time remarked :

"In such an old village as this ghosts are likely to abound."

Now, among the party was a young man, named Dejan, who was terribly afraid of ghosts and tigers. Out of fear he made his bed in the middle of the group. He was the most cowardly of cowards. In terror he lay awake lest something untoward should happen to him. The others tired out by their long day's journey were soon fast asleep. About midnight Dejan heard sounds like a man's footsteps at the back door of the *Nokphanthe*. He lay silently still pretending that he was fast asleep. He did not have the courage to stretch his limbs or even arouse the others. To himself he said : "This is an old village and must certainly be full of ghosts and wandering goblins."

Presently Dejan heard the guffaw of an old man. He opened his eyes cautiously and beheld a tall, ugly old man with hair flaxen-white and nails like the claws of a fierce tiger. He closed his eyes in terror and wrapped his bed-clothes closely around him. The ugly old man muttered aloud :

"Ha, how fast and sound asleep they all are—except that brave puny fellow in the middle."

The voice was that of a ghost; for ghost it really was. Dejan was terribly affrighted at the spectre's ironic innuendo

concerning the low quality of his heart. Still he shammed sound sleep.

The ghost moved about the sleeping men, surveyed them one by one began to count aloud : "Asa, Agin, Jora, Jogin, Ilashi, Niashi, Ilgosh, Niagosh, Gosh.¹...Ha, here is one to spare, the brave little man in the middle." It stopped short and roughly shook Dejan by the head. He tried to cry out, but found his voice choked. Again the ghost repeated the same numeration over the sleepers and once more observed aloud that there was one to spare, the young man in the middle. Then it caught hold of Dejan by his ear and dragged him down to the ground along the notched steps of a log leading from the *Nokphanthe*. Out of excessive fear, the young man submitted meekly to the rough handling of the ghost.

"Now, take up your basket of cotton on your back just as if you were about to carry it away to the market," ordered the ghost, "and dance about in the open courtyard with the basket of cotton still on your back while I beat a tomtom for you."

Dejan had perforce to dance in the open courtyard in front of the *Nokphanthe* with his basket of cotton on his back while the ghost beat the tomtom vigorously from the porch of the old house. If Dejan sat down out of sheer exhaustion, the ghost at once descended and gave him a sound slap on the head. Then he had to get up and dance on and on. Meanwhile the other members of the party slept soundly. It was not before dawn that the ghost disappeared. Dejan fell to the ground exhausted.

At the first cockcrow the nine other members of the party awoke. They kindled the fire, cooked their morning meal and began to eat it. While they ate, they spoke to each other about the sounds of tomtoms which they all heard in their dreams. Presently they missed Dejan ; but decided that he had gone outside. At length one of them descended from the *Nokphanthe* and stumbled over the prostrate form of a man bearing a basket of cotton on his back. As it was still rather dark, he called for a light. When a torch was brought, they discovered Dejan sleeping soundly on the bare ground. They aroused him and asked him why he was asleep in such a strange place. With gasping breath, he slowly related to them his grim experiences with the ghost during the previous night. He looked ten years older, and

appeared like a man dazed. His hair was dishevelled and his clothes were in disorder. The party listened to his tale of fear and fatigue, partly with sympathy and partly with amusement.

Dejan felt so very weak from his hectic night that he was unable to lift his basket of cotton. So, when the nine villagers started off again for the market carrying their baskets of cotton with them, he had to leave his in the *Nokphanthe* and follow them empty-handed. He was too cowardly to return to his village alone.

On their return from the market the party travelled with much lighter loads, simply a number of needed articles purchased there. Dejan, of course, had nothing. They eventually came to the same village in which they had previously lodged. Dejan felt a shivering sensation creeping up his spine when he beheld the place of his fearful experience. There he discovered that his basket of cotton had mysteriously disappeared. The party continued on their journey home. However, night overtook them once more and they decided to camp by the side of a small river. It was rather cold at that season of the year; so they gathered a lot of dried logs and built a large fire. Over the same fire they cooked their rice and curry, ate it and lay down to sleep. As before Dejan found a place to sleep in the middle of the party.

Darkness descended. Dejan was seized with a strange fear. The others talked to one another, cracked jokes and told tales. Finally, one by one, they fell off to sleep—all except Dejan who lay wide awake thinking that a real tiger or a *matchadu* (tiger-man) might be lurking about. A little before midnight the sleepless young man heard a swishing sound in the channel of the river. A male *matchadu* in the form of a tiger was making his way up the river, wading through the shallow, shrunken water. Attracted by the smell of fire, he approached the camp. Dejan watched him come and sit by the glowing embers. Out of terror he dared not stir lest he attract the ferocious beast. His companions were sleeping as soundly and fearlessly as if they were in their own beds in their own homes. The tiger made a sort of pass over the sleepers as if to hypnotize them into a deeper, unconscious slumber.

The *matchadu* began to count the sleeping men, slightly touching their heads, one by one, with his paws. He muttered aloud: "Asa, Agin, Jora, Jogin, Bina, Khawa, Ona, Ongget.

Olashi, Gangget."² The last word was spoken just as he touched the head of Dejan. The lad attempted to cry out, but found his throat dry and his voice stifled due to his excessive fear. He remained as motionless as if he were dead. The *matchadu* grabbed him by the hair, lowered his own head, and whispered into the frightened young man's ear :

"Keep quiet. I am not really a tiger as you behold me. I am a man who has assumed the role of a tiger for the convenience of roaming about at night. At home I have a fair daughter, much money, valuable gongs, precious beads and rare cloth. Come, get on my back and I will take you to my home to be wedded to my beautiful daughter."

Almost deprived of reason and volition as Dejan was due to his excessive fear and weakness of spirit he obediently got up upon the back of the ferocious beast who slid silently out of the camp and made for his own village at the lower stages of the stream. Soon both of them were lost in the pitch darkness of the night.

The next morning the nine other members of the party awoke at the first cockcrow. They lighted the fire anew to prepare their morning meal. One of them discovered large pugmarks on the sand beside the camp. At this they all concluded that Dejan, whom they found to be missing, had been carried away alive by a tiger and devoured in the deep forest. After eating, they gathered up the belongings and started off for their native village. There they stated all they knew and believed about Dejan's fate to his wife and relations. On hearing the story, an octogenarian of the village remarked with some asperity :

"Such an extremely cowardly, sneaking, depraved imbecile like Dejan deserves no better fate than being carried off by a tiger even in the midst of a crowd. He was a man devoid of will-power, energy and courage ; a man who completely lacked alertness, wariness, self-guard and presence of mind. He was mere chaff, a debased specimen of humanity. Under the stupor of alcoholic influence he used to brag lustily of himself ; but he had not even the bravery to face a grasshopper. Beware. Be not like Dejan who is quite unworthy of our race, my children. Tigers are fond of devouring such a man as Dejan. They are careful to discern brave, strong, energetic persons of firm deter-

mination and leave them safely alone. They will never dare touch the brave of heart."

Now, meanwhile the *matchadu* carried Dejan on his back to his cavern home a short distance from the river. He put his victim on the ground in front of his house and shouted to his wife and daughter. Strangely enough, the tiger was now transformed into a tall, hairy, burly man. His wife and daughter, too, were both hairy, savage-looking, black human beings, that is, their bodies at least had the semblance of human forms.

The *matchadu* who was the head of the family said to his daughter, "See, I have brought you a human husband. Take good care of him and give him nourishing food every day." Then he turned to Dejan and announced :

"This is my fair daughter. Her name is *Matcha Buduma*. You are married to her now. When I say 'married', it is done. You are now husband and wife. Do not leave this house, except in our company. Have no fears. You are as safe here as you would be in your home at your native village. Make yourself comfortable."

Dejan felt himself physically transported to another world quite different from the world of men and women of his own village, although he lived under the same sun and the same sky, the same moon and silent stars. Being so transplanted there out of the pale of humanity, the young timid man startled at every gruesome sight and sudden sound. He was powerless to do his own thinking. His days were passed in oblivion. The *matchadu* family employed him for all the menial tasks of their home. So, in fact, Dejan lived in the place not so much as the husband of the *matchadu's* fair daughter ; but as a servant of all trades for the savage-looking, man-eating family of half-men and half-tigers. Though these beings could talk like men, they often growled and acted like tigers in many ways. They were all as sturdy as the strongest tiger. Dejan was absolutely helpless in their presence. Even his wife was physically ten times stronger than he was and was quite capable of keeping him under control.

Dejan had to gather wood, draw water, cook rice and boil flesh for the whole family. In the interior of the cave was a spacious hall where the fire was kindled and where joints of flesh, often human flesh, was roasted on iron spits. Every night the head *matchadu* absented himself from the house ; and every morn-

ing Dejan found fresh supplies of flesh of all kinds, deer, swine, cows and human. Dejan had to cut up recently killed human bodies and dress them for food. He himself was forced to live on human flesh as did his associates.

One day, while Dejan was gathering fuel outside the cave, the head *matchadu* said to his daughter :

"That nominal human husband of yours is growing fairly fat. Feed him with the best food and drink we can afford. When he has grown sufficiently bulky, we shall cook him with some *mehbitchi kimchibal* (a jungle vegetable) and have a fine meal out of him. Already he is enough to make our mouths water."

For three years more Dejan lived in the cave as a slave of the *matchadus*. During that time he was being deliberately fattened up in order to provide them a pleasing repast some day. At the end of that time he was taken down to the river by the head *matchadu* and his daughter to catch fish, prawns and crabs. On the same day a party of six fully grown men came up the river carrying big daos in search of *nahrong* fish (mahseer). At the sight of the oncomers the *matchadu* and his daughter took to their heels. Dejan stood motionless, quite nonplussed. The head *matchadu* turned back, seized Dejan, and dragged him as far as the back of the river. As he could not negotiate the huge boulders lying at the foot of the steep rocky bank with his burden, the *matchadu* released Dejan and scurried away.

The party of six espied the *matchadus* and rushed forward : but the savage couple made good their escape. The men were astonished to find a big, stupid-looking man standing forlornly at the foot of the steep bank of the river. They saw his severely bruised legs and body, the result of the late rough-handling by the head *matchadu*. They surrounded him and asked him who he was and where he lived. With great trepidation, Dejan stuttered :

"I-I-I-li-li-live wi-wi-wi-with th-th-th-the ma-ma-mat-mat mat-cha-cha-chad-d-d-dus. I-I-I-m-m-m-am n-na-na-named De-de-de-ja-ja-jan."

"But where do you actually live ?" they probed.

"I-I-I-li-In th-th-the ca-c-c-cave," Dejan stammered further, pointing with his finger in the direction of the woods.

The party of men took Dejan to their village where he slowly regained his human speech and ways. In the course of time they

were able to ascertain the name of Dejan's native village, took him there, and restored him to his relations. He belonged to the Songsakdohbe clan of that place.

Dejan never fully recovered his former mental equilibrium. He talked and acted like a harmless maniac for the rest of his days. From his almost unintelligible jibberings his fellow-villagers eventually came to gather the story of the actual experiences he had undergone. Later he died in abject poverty and misery.

When in the dusk of evening of the day of his death his relations prepared to cremate Dejan's body on a funeral pyre, according to the customary practice of the Achiks, a huge tiger lay immersed in a shallow pool of water in a stream nearby. As the flames began to pirouette around the corpse, the tiger sprang out of its hiding place and with lightning speed snatched the half-charred corpse out of the fire and disappeared into the nearest thicket. The beast's quick action seemed to proclaim; "What is ours, we take."

—Told by Sonaram R. Shangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

ORIGIN OF POISON

The mother of poison was named Bisibima Khontilongma Amebima Chengmebima; while poison herself was called Khilengma. The mother was as big as a hill and as tall as the tallest tree in the world. It made one shudder just to look at her; and no creature on earth had the power to kill the mother of poison.

Once when Bisibima Khontilongma was roving about a marshy country between two mighty cliffs in the land of Chiagipok Chimechangbok Chinggil Chitinggil,¹ she was seen by the owner of the place named Maagil Tongjang Nahsenchi Baarang. He knew that the mother of poison could never be taken alive, so he levelled his arrows at her armpit and shot. She remained unharmed. Just then Sodu Bakrepa Banda Jangmepa,² who was armed from head to bottom, put his appearance. Maagil Tongjang induced him to assault the mother of poison with his deadly weapons. This he did; and was able to overpower the formidable foe.

Now, the head of Bisibima Khontilongma was put on Cham-bildohmapa Narangpawangga.³ The carcass was laid on some nettle leaves and cut to pieces by Mikrongret Gangchingchet.⁴ The now poisonous prickly grassworm, known as *spal*, was used as a support during the dissecting of the body. The nettle leaves and other plants and herbs on which was spread the flesh of Bisibima Khontilongma, absorbed the poisonous element from it. That is the reason why they are poisonous nowadays.

At that time Misi Susime apportioned poison to all living beings who desired to possess it. She decreed that those who wanted it must come themselves and obtain it gratuitously once and for all. No creature, excepting man, was allowed to take away more poison than it actually needed. So bees, hornets, wasps, ants, insects, and scorpions were given their just share of poison. Then came the snakes who carried their poison in sacks suspended to their necks. Finally came the centipedes, the poisonous worms, such as *jongsuhs* and *jongshadats*, and other beings to get their share of the bestowal of poison at that time. So this is where snakes, scorpions, hornets, bees, wasps, centipedes,

and so on, got the deadly venom which they possess even to this very day.

It was the Goddess Dakgipa Rugipa Patigipa Rahrongipa² who supervised the apportioning of poison at this time. Some beings did not feel the need of poison, while others were too indolent to go and get their share. However, the goddess only offered the gift but once.

Now, the python, the patriarchal head of the snake race, was told by his compatriots to go and get his share of the poison. He answered proudly :

"All my subjects have gone to get it. They will not overlook the need of their patriarchal head. They will bring me a share of their own accord. Also the one who is doling out the poison will not overlook such an important personage as I am."

The python waited a long time for some of his subjects to bring him poison. But it was the decree of the Great Susime, endorsed by the Supreme Goddess, Tatara Rabuga Dakgipa Rugipa, that no one could obtain this precious gift of permanent intrinsic value by proxy. So, no one brought the python even the smallest pittance of poison. At this, he decided to go to the place himself and get his own share. However, it was too late. All was over. He was left behind.

When he discovered that all the poison had been apportioned, the python lay in frantic hope that he might obtain at least a bit of the poison. Not a particle of the poison was left. This is the reason why the python is non-poisonous even up to this very day. In reference to this incident the Achiks when speaking figuratively of a person who lets anything worthwhile slip away through indolence or carelessness or through undue obsession of self-importance or pride, are accustomed to say : "*The python did not get his share of poison.*"

Now, the non-poisonous aquatic snake, known as *Chipunahkhathok*, was returning home bearing his share of poison in his wallet when he saw a small pool of water full of fish on the way. He looked at them with covetous eyes. At last his greediness got the upper hand, and putting his wallet down on a flat piece of stone in the dry channel of the stream, he got down into the pool to catch fish. While he was immersed in the pool, a sudden shower of rain came pouring down. He failed to notice it or

to think of his wallet. His whole mind was on the pleasant business of catching fish.

Soon the shrunken stream rose in spate due to the heavy rains. The wallet of poison was then carried away by the current down into the plains where it mingled with the water of placid lakes. The poison became loose and was scattered abroad so that *maghur*, *singhi* and other kind of fish took possession of it. This is how some fish have come to be poisonous.

Soon after the watersnake remembered his wallet containing his share of the poison. He could not find it anywhere; and that is the reason why the watersnake remains non-poisonous up to this very day. The wallet itself was snatched up by the puffer-fish, who still wears it proudly.

—Told by Jenga Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

THE LIVING BEINGS WHO FIRST ACQUIRED STEEL

The mother of steel was called Roejing Jorime Jochimchi ; and his father, Duh-a Raja Jingi Nokma.¹ Steel was born in the country of Ahning Gring Wana Chining Gring Wacha Ahsong Nongrengreng Chiga Nengchibing.²

Dokgipa Rugipa Tatara Rabuga³ at whose command the world was made, had fetched steel up from the subterranean region to the terrestrial surface. For equipping living beings with weapons of offence and defence steel was without peer. Therefore, prior to her dispatching them to their respective elements, the supreme goddess gathered together all the living beings that dwelt on the terrestrial surface, in the subterranean regions and beneath the waters. She smelted steel in their presence at a place known as Chiginap Rongjamdap Chibrasni Wahgechangsni⁴ in the country of *Gakatram* Melaram Dikgrinram Baweram.⁵

As the supreme goddess pursued her task, she uttered aloud the names of those present in order to ascertain who was worthy to first acquire steel. No sooner had she spoken the names of Shangma Maopa Ranja Chongdopa Seksopa Sekrapa⁶ and Shangma Khorengpa Ranja Khobinpa Ganggipak Chidual⁷ than the steel smelting in a wide-mouthed open cauldron began to flake. Promptly the two heroes snatched up the shimmering particles. Both of them belonged to the Shangma matri-phratry. They were the first living beings in the world to acquire steel.

As Shangma Maopa and Shangma Khorengpa were the first living beings in the world to possess steel, they were subsequently the first heroes since the world began to be equipped with weapons forged from the formidable metal.

Wana Wangga Dudu Chompa Aropa Bindopa,⁸ the son of Shangma Maopa, and Marak Khorengpa Makal Khobinpa, the son of Shangma Khorengpa, next secured steel from their respective fathers. They both belonged to the Marak matri-phratry having derived their phylum from their mother's side according to the matriarchal custom of the age.

Later, under the direction of Dakgipa Rugipa steel was

smelted by Shangma Ahning Silginchi Ranja Tantani,⁹ who also was a member of the Shangma matri-phratry. Finally, steel was apportioned to all living beings by Misi Susime.

The first recipients of steel in this general dispensation were Chada Mitmit and Chada Mehme. Then steel was carried to Slangphakhuri Patalphanikin¹⁰ and Ahsong Badaka Chiga Nodimba.¹¹ Ever since that time all living beings, according to their rank, station, and position in the order of creation, acquired the precious metal and armed themselves with steel weapons as the instrument of their offence and defence.

The weapons of steel still remain with the descendants of the recipients as teeth, claws, talons, and horns.

Long after these eventful days were over, Wana Wangga, the patriarchal head of the tiger family, met Shangma Mikkhelsi Ranja Jahbangsi Khorongmeh-a Khochonngphante Choka Choksi Awalduri Gaderongde¹² the patriarchal head of the deer race, who was one of the best equipped with arms among living beings. Wana Wangga was very much afraid of him, seeing that he was so well fortified. However, one day while admiring the terrible weapons on his head, Wana Wangga, with some trepidation, ventured to ask Shangma Mikkhelsi :

"What do you do with your pugnacious-looking weapons? Do you ever wield them against your enemies?"

Shangma Mikkhelsi replied meekly : "I do nothing with my weapons, neither do I turn them against any living beings. I carry them about with me only because they are mine."

Wana Wangga made up his mind to test the truth of this naive reply. He was envious of the deer's invulnerable-looking weapons. So one day, when the patriarchal head of the deer race was going on a journey, Wana Wangga waylaid him with the purpose of intimidating him. He jumped out suddenly at the passing deer and it dashed away swiftly without any indication of opposition. The patriarchal head of the tiger family was disgusted at this exhibition of temerity on the part of his opponent ; but was quite glad to learn that he was really speaking the truth, and that, with all his warlike trimmings, he was not a being to be feared in the least. Therefore, he lay in ambush for Shangma Mikkhelsi once more, attacked him fearlessly, and killed him outright.

Ever since that time the descendants of Wana Wangga have looked with contempt upon the descendants of Shangma Mikkhelsi. That is the reason why nowadays tigers fearlessly attack, kill, and devour deer.

—Told by Gongsin Shangma Dawa, Nokma,
at Village Marakgre, District Garo Hills.

THE MOTHER OF SALT

The mother of salt was a very dirty-looking old hag. On her eye-sockets, nostrils and cheeks hung filthy mucus secretions. Her whole appearance was disgusting. But she was a grand cook. She could preserve every sort of delicacy in its pristine freshness and taste. No flesh ever decomposed and no foodstuff ever grew rotten under her artful care. Every dish became most palatable under her skilful handling.

However, the mother of salt was terribly afraid of water. In fact she never bathed nor washed her hands, feet and face. She never handled water, but always used some sort of vessel when it was necessary to use it in the pursuance of her culinary art. Her daughter Karitchi¹ was no less filthy.

Now, the son-in-law of the mother of salt had a special liking for the dishes of curry, soup, chutney, and so on prepared by her. Still he was nauseated with the scummy appearance of his mother-in-law and his own wife, Karitchi. So one day he flatly requested the two to take a bath. He gave them a long sermon on the virtues of cleanliness; but it had no effect. They staunchly refused to go near the river. At this the son-in-law used all his art of persuasion to influence them. When this failed, he decided to use force. It pricked his pride to be thwarted by mere women. He would show the two who was superior. So, seething with fury at their obduracy, he roughly dragged the mother and daughter to the river side.

On the way, Karitchi, with tears in her eyes, implored her husband not to act so rashly. In a struggle with him she managed to escape and run away. But the son-in-law did not slacken his grip on the mother of Salt. He relentlessly dragged her nearer and nearer the river. Karitchi followed close behind weeping bitterly at her husband's needless cruelty and hard-heartedness. She watched him unceremoniously plunge her mother forcibly into the water; and saw his chagrin and dismay when the mother of salt dissolved and vanished completely before his very eyes. After this the disconsolate damsel wandered about the wild woods shedding copious tears, seeking

consolation from the trees, plants and herbs. The trees, plants and herbs on which her tears fell became saturated with potash. She travelled on broken-heartedly and at last came to Aema Ditema Songduma *Sagalma*,² the ocean, to which the remains of her mother were carried by the river into which she was plunged. The damsel, still weeping, leaped into the water to discover the spirit of the mother of salt. Her congealed tears became pearls inside the ocean.

—Told by Srimati Kebangma Shangma Rongmuthu
at Wagesik, Baghmara, District Garo Hills.

THE ORIGIN OF RICE

In olden days human beings used to live on wild yams (*discosea*), kochoos (*colocasia indicum*), and other edible tuberous roots. Rice, millet, corn and other esculent grains were then unknown.

There was in the world a gigantic gorgeous Tree of Wealth, known as Gisil Bol Gitol Bol Rikge Samol Jahphang Monol,¹ which had twelve branches toward the East and twelve branches toward the West. One branch bore jewelled fruits of all sorts of mineral wealth, such as diamonds, gold, silver, valuable gongs, and all species of precious stones, while the other branches were heavily laden with fruits of a different kind of wealth, like rice, silk, cotton, and so on.

One branch of this mammoth tree which bore fruits of all kinds of rice covered the marvellous garden of Giting Dinge Rane Dingje² at Ahjarek Chijapa³ in the country of Silchi Ring-reram, Gitol Tingtotram, Dohkatchi Nangroram, Rikgitok Nang-satram, Matma Ongtururam, Kitma Balgitoram, Mongma Dangtoram, Matchu Kinma Onram, Udare Jakbri Mehgongma Kolatchi.⁴ Each of the twigs of this branch bore fruits of different coloured rice—yellow, red, blue, green, violet, purple, orange and white. Nobody could pluck the fruits of rice from this branch. Even the gods and goddesses such as Salgra and Susime, found it difficult to get at rice; for it appeared to them that the fruits could be plucked only from beneath, while seen from above; and on the contrary, they seemed to be easily plucked from above; while viewed from below. It was one Jaru Meh-a Jabal Phante Okkhuangsi Jahpat-Chongsi,⁵ the god of the winds, who made friends with Mikka Temma Stil Rongma, the god of Hail and Storm, and shook the fruits of rice off the branch with his strong legs.

The god of the Winds, careless of the fallen fruits, then idly spent his time in the high mansions of Doh-olwak Doh-dikki,⁶ playing his flutes and indolently whistling. So, Ahning Nosiksik Chining Nomindil Ahning Diperi Chining Dipera⁷ picked up the vital and life-sustaining grains from the ground and sowed them in her own garden. Misi Apilpa Saljong

Galapa,⁸ the wealthy god of the celestial regions, got some rice grains from her and planted them in his fields.

One day Misi Apilpa was going to the Anthi Racha Akhang Gitel market at Benagong Rangsaljong Wakmethom Sangkhati,⁹ taking with him his servants, whose names were : Atamajong, Dalmajong, Tinia, Chokia, Gogosia, Balmini, Rujina and Kaljina. This wealthy god had at that time a monopoly on all edible grains.

On the way to the market place, he met a man of terrestrial region, who was known as Ahni Apilpa Chini Galapa¹⁰ or Rasong. The man had in his hands a small hoe with which he used to eke out his living by digging up yams and edible tuberous roots. He was clothed in shabby, tattered garments of bark and bedraggled from head to foot with mud as a result of his labours. So, when he saw Misi Apilpa approaching, the man became conscious of his shameful appearance and essayed to conceal himself behind a nearby huge rock. The god of the celestial regions, however, espied him and bade him to come out into the open road from his place of concealment. The man bashfully complied. Whereupon Misi Apilpa asked him what his name was and to what clan he belonged. He replied timidly, "I am named Ahni Apilpa Chini Galapa. I am one of the patriarchs of men." The god made friends with him, and they sat down on the top of a big rock under a *dongkreng* tree (*amoor wallichii*) to take their respective midday meals.

At home Misi Apilpa used white rice and fat fish as his staple food. Ahni Apilpa, to whom this new kind of food was unknown, simply used coarse grub of yams and serpentine tuberous roots as his food at home. On this day Misi Apilpa had brought with him cooked rice packed in leaves for his midday meal. As he was eating it, he noticed his companion's meagre fare and asked him.

"Don't you ever clear jungles and cut down trees for *jhum* cultivation? Hast thou never sown paddy (*oriza sativa*) in thy fields?"

Ahni Apilpa replied, "I used to clear jungles and cut down trees for *jhum* cultivation; but I have never heard what paddy is."

Misi Apilpa took pity on him and shared his cooked rice with him. When they were about to part, he said to his friend :

"When I get back home after the market is over, I will send thee some paddy seeds to sow in thy fields. When thou art blessed with the first-fruits of thy paddy harvest, remember me, my friend, and set aside in my honour some of the first-fruits of thy harvest. Every year do the same thing before thou and thy family partake of it."

Misi Apilpa returned home, he fulfilled his promise by sending some paddy seeds to Ahni Apilpa by one of his servants, named Nokkol Johsiksok Rori Johbongbong. However, this servant of Misi Apilpa, out of jealousy for Ahni Apilpa, took with him some half-dried paddy seeds. Ahni Apilpa sowed them in his fields with much enthusiasm and tended them with great diligence. When the first rains set in and the south winds blew, he was bitterly disappointed at finding that the paddy seeds were not germinating. Becoming very angry, Ahni Apilpa seized Dimre, Choon, Bangshe and Bangding, the celestial messengers of Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa, bound their limbs fast, bored their legs through and closely tethered them with chains. Misi Apilpa presently came down from his heavenly abode and interceded for them, saying :

"The plaintive lamentations of my messengers have reached my ears. I could neither eat nor drink because of their woeful condition. It was my servant Nokkol Johsiksok who gave thee half-dried paddy seeds who is the guilty party. However, I will again send thee more grains of fresh seeds. Pray, set my messengers free."

Ahni Apilpa generously released the celestial captives and, in due time, received a fresh consignment of paddy seeds from Misi Apilpa. With renewed zeal and interest, he sowed them once more in his fields. When the first rains set in and the south winds commenced to blow, the seeds burst forth into lovely buds and gradually grew into sturdy plants. When the rice plants began to ear, Krurangru Grikmesal Deokracha Degong Gitel,¹² the servant of Mattengke Mesewal,¹³ plucked some grains off the stalks without the knowledge of the cultivator. Whereupon, Sugra Mantija¹⁴ promptly went to Misi Apilpa and deceitfully lied to him, saying :

"See, Ahni Apilpa slights thee and does not set aside for thee some of the first-fruits of his paddy harvest which he has already begun to reap by furtively plucking grains off the stalks."

Misi Apilpa was much irritated by the message which he had received concerning his terrestrial friend. Consequently, he seized Ahni Apil, Chini Gala, Ahni Dimre, Chini Bangshe, Ahni Choon and Chini Bangding, who were sons and messengers of Ahni Apilpa, bored their legs through, fettered their limbs, and kept them in bondage.

Ahni Apilpa then went to Misi Apilpa and ardently appealed to him, saying :

"I have not as yet plucked the grain in my fields. My family and I have never slighted thee, my friend, in whom I implicitly trust. It was Krurangru Deokracha and Mattengke who stealthily plucked the grains off the stalks. I have been much maligned and wholly misrepresented before thee. Pray, set my servants free."

Misi Apilpa spontaneously let loose the prisoners. Then, he and Ahni Apilpa settled their differences and wove a pattern of new understanding. They plighted an eternal covenant by which each was bound to respect the other's feelings and claims to honour and consideration.

When the paddy crops were ripe for harvest, Ahni Apilpa set aside some bran from the first-fruits of his paddy, and just before the commencement of the actual *jhum* harvest which takes place about the time when Sirius, known as Wahlsado, a star of the first magnitude, rises and sets with the sun, offered at the main middle pillar of the house, known as *maljuri* or *truma*, the bran, a little quantity of the first-fruit of his fields, burning incense and poured out rice-beer as sacrifices to Misi Apilpa, uttering meanwhile his prayer thus :

"To thee, my friend, I offer these first-fruits. Be thou not angry with me, O Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa. Dost thou not shed tears at my gifts? My gratitude and love for thee, deep and ineffable, my devotion unbounded, and my regard unutterable—all go wafted towards thee, O thou benign dweller in the serene ethereal heights of heaven. Thou hast been kind and good to me beyond expression. Thou hast made the shaky plants firm and hast nursed them throughout. Thou hast helped the paddy stalks fructify. Yea, thou, my friend, my partner, my ally wilt partake of the first-fruits of my paddy harvest ere my family and I taste them."

Thus did Ahni Apilpa perform the sacrificial ceremony of

thanksgiving to Misi Apilpa, offering his gifts on a small altar of flat stone at the foot of the main central pillar of his dwelling house amid burning, sweet-smelling incense. Misi Apilpa was much pleased with the sacrificial gifts Ahni Apilpa offered from his fields on Mongre Hill in Achik Ahsong. The god of the celestial regions blessed his friend, saying :

"Let crops grow well in the future fields of this man and his descendants. Let this man and his descendants be blessed forever. Let this sacrificial thanksgiving offering be continued annually at this season when I come to visit the earth."

Ahni Apilpa continued to carry on his *jhum* cultivation year after year and faithfully performed his thanksgiving offering at the commencement of each paddy harvest. He grew rich and prosperous. He exhorted his sons and daughters to pursue *jhum* cultivation and thus preserve the seeds of rice, millet and corn. He warned them never to neglect to pay adoration to Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa, the god of the firmament and of fertility.

Ever since that time the Achik, one of the descendants of Ahni Apilpa, annually before the beginning of the *jhum* harvest, observes the ceremonial offerings of the first-fruits of his fields to Misi Apilpa by burning sweet-smelling incense during the oblations and pouring out a little quantity of rice-beer at the foot of the main central post of his dwelling. This ceremonial performance is known as *Churugala Chachat So'a*.

—Told by Kimchang Shangma Agitok
at Village Sohragiri, District Garo Hills.

THE FIRST ADULTERER

The mother of *Muni* was called Ahning Jinjini Chining Jinjina.¹ *Muni* was under conception for full seven winters at the end of which the mother laboured for full seven days and full seven nights. Water was boiled in seven huge cauldrons in which to bathe the new-born child. At the time of birth Koppalmari Malbitchi Chengkopjop² nursed both the mother and baby. The baby-*muni* was born without stomach and would neither suck its mother's milk or grow into anything. Therefore, out of disgust for her offspring, the mother requested the Ahnang brothers and the Dilkhang uncles³ to take the child away and throw it somewhere. The Ahnang brothers and the Dilkhang uncles, in compliance with her request, took away the baby-*muni* and hurled it down the Ahguare Rongpakdare⁴ and left it there to perish.

Khorengpa Mikkingbanda Kobinpa Jahthengchua⁵ saw the *muni*, and, thinking that it was something edible, picked it up and flew away with it to the branch of a dead tree. While he sat there with the *muni*, Khorengpa suddenly felt very sleepy. His eyelids became very dull and heavy. Not being able to ascertain the cause of his sudden drowsiness, he dropped the *muni* at Chibrasni Wahge Chongsni⁶ in the land of Dri Ahkhuhchot Rado Chubanda⁷. There the baby-*muni* grew into a soporific plant with broad leaves like those of the *udare* tree (*sterculia villosa*) and with stems like those of the *wahltre* bamboo (*melo-canna bambusoides*). This was the first *muni* plant that ever grew on the earth.

Now, in those days, Niba Ajepa Jonja Giljepa⁸ dressed himself in clothes of various colours—red, purple, green, orange—put on a fiery red turban on his head, took up his *milam* (two-edged sword) and *spi* (rectangular shield) in his hands and went forth to a market in the vicinity of Maadi Rongkuchi⁹ in order to purchase therefrom a valuable gong, a *danil* (round-shaped shield made of rhinoceros' hide), a pair of brass elbow-rings, known as *jaksils*, a *milam dykgyl* (two-edged crooked sword with a looped hilt), a bandage of precious beads and sundry other articles needful for the performance of the Gana ceremony.

On the way Niba Ajepa met Salgra,¹⁰ his brother-in-law,

who was coming to his house for a visit. They greeted each other and at once fell to talking. Niba Ajepa said to him :

"Thou go alone to my house. There thou wilt find my wife, thy own niece. She will not fail in her duties towards her maternal uncle. She will see to thy comfort. There thou wilt find a castrated pig in the pigsty. Kill it and eat it. There is some brewed rice-beer in the inner room of my house. Make it ready and drink as much as thou wishest. In short, make thyself at home there, my dear brother-in-law. I myself must needs go to the market."

The two then parted company. The wife of Niba Ajepa was called Rechi Dilje. She was one of Salgra's closest maternal nieces.

Accordingly Salgra went to the house of Niba Ajepa. Rechi Dilje welcomed her maternal uncle right cordially. She killed the castrated pig and fetched the pitcher of rice-beer for him. With the best of white rice, pork curry cooked with desiccated grains of fermented bamboo-shoots and other savoury condiments and rice-beer in decorated jugs, she fed her uncle sumptuously. Salgra ate and drank until late at night. Rechi Dilje's young daughter, Aje Gilje, a girl of full six winters and full six summers had already retired. So Salgra sat alone talking with his dutiful niece.

As the hours passed, Salgra's drunkenness began to make itself evident. He looked at his beautiful niece, marvelled at her irresistible beauty and charm, and, casting aside all delicacy, and honour, began to make love to her. At first the young woman resisted his amorous approaches ; but finally gave in to her uncle's importunities. Ever since that day, if any man makes himself guilty of incest with his own niece, the Achiks called him : "Uncle Sham Salgra." Salgra has ever since been known as the First Adulterer.

Now, while Niba Ajepa was on his way to the market place he halted at Dri Ahkhuhchot for a rest. There at Chibrasni, he put down his *milam* and *spi* against the *muni* plant about which he knew nothing at all and sat down beside it himself to take his midday meal. After a couple of mouthfuls of rice and curry he began to become terribly drowsy, and his eyelids became so heavy that soon he fell asleep just as he was, in a sitting position. Bisikkrom Bidhotare, the Mother goddess, woke him up, saying :

"O Niba Ajepa Jonja Giljepa, what art thou doing?"

After he was fully aroused Bisikkrom Bidhotare showed Niba Ajepa the *muni* plant and advised him to take a few stalks of it, tie it up in his clothes and conceal it in the chink of his *spi*. This Niba Ajepa did; so he became the first living being to acquire the *muni* plant.

As he proceeded on his way tigers, bears, elephants and all other dangerous beasts of the forest became dull and sleepy at the sight of him. In this way they were rendered incapable of causing him any harm. At the market-place itself, everybody who came in contact with him became sleepy and dull. All the vendors, stall-keepers, hawkers, peddlers with whom he came in touch, became drowsy as long as they were in his presence. They lost their usual wariness, cautiousness and presence of mind, while he alone remained alert and wide-awake. When he purchased anything, the shopkeepers became dreamy and would neither bargain or haggle with him; but gave away their articles for whatever price he offered. Even if he went away without paying anything at all, they were incapable of raising a protest. Such were the benefits he derived from the *muni* plant which he possessed.

Finally, Niba Ajepa returned home. There no one dared tell him of his wife's lapse of virtue. It was *Dohsurae*, the patriarchal head of a kind of speckled thrush, who informed him of Salgra's adultery with his wife. At this revelation Niba Ajepa took up his *nilam* and *spi* and went to Saljongpatra Rong-dohgachol¹¹ where he lay in wait for Salgra to pass. But, when Salgra did approach, the earth quaked, the stones rolled down and the mountains rocked so fiercely that Niba Ajepa got up and ran away in fear. On his way he encountered Khatchi Beare who asked him:

"Why art thou running so fast?"

"I am fleeing in fear from Salgra," replied Niba Ajepa.

"Dig a small hole in the ground in the middle of the path-way at Saljongpatra. Put thy *muni* plant in it, mixed with some invisible harmful germs and cover the whole thing with earth. Then Salgra will not be able to come any farther." advised Khatchi Beare.

Niba Ajepa followed the directions to the letter. When Salgra came to the spot, he could not advance a foot farther,

due to the effects of the *muni* plant. As a result, the whole earth was covered with darkness. Rechi Dilje ranted against her husband, saying :

"When darkness lingers like this day after day, the world becomes gloomy and dreary. What hast thou done to prevent Salgra, from coming to us ? Without Salgra, who is the father of light, darkness will become perpetual, and all living beings, the green grass, the tall trees, animals, in short, everything will perish on the earth. I cannot now distinguish rice from grit, bean-seeds from rat-dung and millet grain from sand. Go and reconcile thyself with Salgra and allow him to come as ever."

Niba Ajepa Jonja Giljepa replied irritably : "Am I to go first to ask for a reconciliation ? Thou art asking for the impossible. Let the debauched, lecherous Salgra be punished. Thou talkest nonsense when thou speakest about darkness. What is darkness ? It does not exist, except in thine own ignorance. Nothing but will-to sight will give thee light. Thou possessest light of thine own which thou canst develop to perfection until thou wilt be able to see as clearly as in the sunshine. Banish thy ignorance and thou wilt see. We have no need of Salgra."

During those dark days Renga Rengko Wasingpa Wakhongpa, the patriarchal head of the bears, passed through Saljongpatra, trod upon the *muni* plant and dislodged it. After that Salgra was able to pass on ; and the darkness which had covered the earth for so long, utterly disappeared. The world was once more bathed in light. Soon again the bustle of life was evident everywhere.

Niba Ajepa was not aware that the *muni* plant had been unknowingly removed by the patriarchal head of the bears. He had the impression that Salgra himself had been able of his own power to surmount the obstacles presented by the *muni* plant. For this reason he feared Salgra very much. When Salgra approached his habitat, Niba Ajepa could no longer bear his presence. Therefore, taking his wife, Rechi Dilje with him, he fled away to the plains and the lower slopes of the hills and settled there. In this place his wife was soon estranged from him because of his having eaten earthworms.

—Told by Dingban Marak Raksam
at Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

THE FIRST MALADY

Once, in ancient times, Mane Pilte, the mother of the Earth, suffered from malady. She had an acute feverish headache, felt giddy and everything seemed to swim hazily before her eyes. Hot perspiration streamed from her body and frothy foam flowed from her open mouth. She writhed in great anguish, moaned and groaned under the severe pain.

As Manè Piltè thus suffered, Chameh-apa Bolagipi,¹ a man of mature mind and wide experiences, exhorted people to stock up firewood in their houses and to lay up a supply of drinking water in vessels to be used at home during the period of Manè Piltè's great affliction. He entreated them to keep themselves indoors for the time being.

But a young man, Dakbude Rangsha Kamal Kilterangre Chokkephante,² would not harken to the sage's pertinent counsels. He set his feet within the pale of Manè Piltè's place of suffering. Suddenly he felt dizzy, began to sweat profusely, was afflicted with a severe headache, and soon became like a man distraught. He was the first human being to be attacked with malady.

In agony from the intense pain in his head, the self-willed young man leaped about, and moaned and howled and yelled frantically. In his frenzy he finally plunged wildly into a nearby river and perished. The water was infected and the fell disease was passed on to Nahma Nahsa Rimu Rimrong, the matriarchal head of the fishes. From her it spread to the water-nymph, Munè Dingdil Sahnè Bandil,³ who, at the time, was washing her clothes and bathing her legs in the same river a little farther on. Afterwards a damsel, known as Duh-e-Khale Charenobon,⁴ who was accustomed to eat and drink freely with Munè Dingdil contracted the fell malady. And so the disease spread rapidly and could not be exterminated, even by sacrificial offerings.

One day, as Duh-e-Khale was washing her clothes and sunning them on the bank of the same river, she espied Rikra brothers⁵ and the Matcha uncles⁶ coming up the infected waterway, catching fish and crabs. Discovering her affliction, they took the damsel with them, and in her place, set up a statue

of clay in her exact likeness by the riverside. With the aid of potent oblations and powerful exorcisms, they managed to persuade her malady to pass into this image of clay. Feverish headache and feeling of dizziness departed from the suffering damsel and lodged themselves in the clay image.

The brothers and uncles then transported the image of clay to the place where the funeral ceremony of Misipa Saljongpa⁷ had occurred. There the statue began to become animate. First, its eyelids began to flutter ; then its lips commenced to move ; and, finally, it started to talk like a human being. Any question put to it was answered promptly and to the point. Whenever people laughed at the behaviour of the image, they were immediately attacked with malarial fever. This showed that the fell disease was still present among them.

Finally, with a view to getting rid of the obstinate malady, after many more sacrificial offerings had fruitlessly been made, the people hurled the clay image into the volcano, Walma Daria Agal Sangkia.⁸

—Told by Dingban Marak Raksam
at Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

THE FIRST RAPE OF A HUMAN SPIRIT

Once, in very ancient times, Cholsi Okkhuangshi Jari Jahpha Cholsi,¹ the god of the Winds, went roving about the length and breadth of lands and seas. As he thus scoured up and down the face of the whole world, the hairs of his legs came in violent contact with the delicate body of Wahphangma Ringrangma,² the younger sister of Dura Kochokrong,³ Songdu Koborong,⁴ Golapa Nagande⁵ and Khuhsimang Chongdingpa.⁶

Due to injuries received at that time from the formidable impact, Wahphangma lay in a moribund state suffering chronic pains and severe bruises on her whole body. Dura Kochokrong deeply lamented the sad state of his sister's devastated form.

With a view to restoring Wahphangma to her former health and vigor by means of exorcisms and sacrificial offerings, the elder brother unscrupulously seized the spirit of Chasama Mongjima.⁷ He speedily bound it up with a strong, olive-green rope and carried it hurriedly away. As the olivaceous rope⁸ touched her spirit, Chasama herself suddenly felt physically unwell. A sickening chill passed through her body, and she shiveringly trembled from an icy coldness. Red blotches began to appear on her skin. The reason for all these sudden symptoms was that her spirit was being slowly but relentlessly dragged away by the elder brother of Wahphangma. This was the first rape of a human spirit.

By accident Khatchi Biare⁹ and Rangshi Tokkini,¹⁰ the maternal uncles of Chasama happened to come by on their way back home from a marketplace. Seeing the captor heartlessly taking away the spirit of their niece by force, they asked him the reason for his savage behaviour. Golapa Nagande verbosely replied :

"I am carrying her away in order to offer her as a sacrificial victim on behalf of our niece, Wahphangma, who is in a precarious condition as a result of her having suffered a severe blow from the hairs of the legs of Cholsi Okkhuangshi."

The maternal uncles of Chasama Mongjima were quite unsympathetic with the captor's cause. They retorted with fierce determination :

"No ! No ! No ! We will not permit the spirit to go with thee. We will not allow our dear niece to be taken away. No ! No ! No !"

At Saljongpatra Rongdohgachol, Salgra and Susime met the bickering foursome and addressing Golapa Nagande, asked : "For what purpose is the spirit of Chasama being thus led captive ?"

He answered, "I am taking her away to use as a sacrificial offering needful for the restoration to health of my younger sister, Wahphangma."

Then Salgra advised Khatchi Biari and Rangshi Tokkini what they should do to win back their niece, Chasama, saying :

"Go and pluck some hairs from the legs and eyelashes of Ahni Manè¹¹ Mother Earth, and Chini Pildè¹², Mother Water. Next, fill your mouths with their blood and perform an exorcism by blowing out the blood in sprays before an open, conical-shaped bamboo framework (named *chokarek*). Call out repeatedly the name of your niece. Do this faithfully ; and the life of the girl will be restored."

When Khatchi Biari and Rangshi Tokkini dutifully performed the exorcism according to the directions of Salgra, strength began to return to Chasama and she was soon restored to her normal state of health and energy. Fresh blood surged through her veins. Her appetite was revived and she was able to eat and drink as before.

Meanwhile, Golapa Nagande was still sadly bemoaning the rueful plight of Wahphangma because her head still lay inert and her body was yet devoid of its former strength and beauty. Salgra then commanded them :

"Go seize Ahbengma Disengma, Matchima Rorima, and Mahsima Mahbema¹³ in lieu of Chasama Mongjima."

Accordingly Golapa Nagande carried away vital human principles of Ahbengma Disengma,¹⁴ and Mahsima Mahbema¹⁵ in order to alleviate the sufferings of his sister, Wahphangma. After a series of exorcisms performed by the brothers and their relatives, it was seen that the olive-green rope binding the prisoners became taut. This was the signal that their efforts had met with success ; so Golapa Nagande untied the captives and set them free. Golapa Nagande thoughtlessly left the rope and came in to the courtyard of Durama Imbama.

Ultimately the olivaceous rope came into the possession of Aber Rora,¹⁶ who used it to bind up the children of Shangma Dripa Chondipa,¹⁷ a simple human patriarch. For his foul deed Shangma Dripa relentlessly pursued Abet Rora, finally captured him, and was about to deal with him a death blow when Salgra incidentally made his appearance and reconciled them to each other. Afterwards Abet Rora and Shangma Dripa became fast friends, living in mutual accord and respecting each other's rights and privileges. Never again did Abet Rora molest the children of men, unless they greatly offended him by their wanton encroachments and audacious intrusions upon the privacy of his habitat.

In the latter stages of the destructive war between the children of Misi Saljong on one hand and the children of Ahning Chining on the other in the days of yore, Abet Rora was in great danger of losing his life for want of food, drink and shelter. He was writhing in agony from the pangs of hunger and thirst, when he was befriended by Angker-rong Damchong¹⁸ who took him to his home and fed him with the fruit of the *khotamari* tree (*turpinia pomifera*). In this way the life of Abet Rora was spared.

Since that time Abet Rora has been settling at the sources of streams among the big rocks in the majestic ancient woods, building his house in an upside-down manner by means of the wiry roots of the *boltotu* tree (*mallotus roxburghianus*), and the hanging stems of the *samnatik* cane (*ormosia robusta*). He has still in his possession the strong olive-green rope of malady. Beware !

—Told by Dingban Marak Raksam
at Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

THE HOT GREEN-YELLOW ROPE OF MALADY

One day Ruutrebang Rebangbangjang, the daughter of Durama Imbama came to the Anti Racha Ahkang Gitel¹ market. To the same place also came Bokring Meh-a Baling Phante,² the son of Walangpa.³ He saw the girl and fell in love with her. She reciprocated his love and said to him :

"Please come to my mother's house sometime and I will cook dinner for thee. When thou comest, take care that thou dost not walk past the habitation of Skal Laikoksi Kamal Tusi-dumu.⁴ That is the abode of the stumpy-bodied relentless vampire with long and spindled legs. If thou dost, the vampire will suck vitality from thy liver and lungs."

Before long Bokring Meh-a came to see his beloved. In his thoughtlessness, he passed through the abode of the vampire. Skal Laikoksi bound him fast with one end of a hot olivaceous rope of malady, thus robbing his liver and lungs of their vitality. With the other end of the rope in his hand, the vampire followed his victim to the precincts of Durama Imbama's mansions. She saw what had happened and drove the vampire off by exorcisms and effective sacrifices. In fear the evil vampire hurried away leaving the hot rope of malady in the courtyard of Durama's house.

This hot rope of malady was fashioned by Simakpa Dingnakpa Imbaldengma out of the umbilical cord of Manè Piltè, the Mother Earth, for Skal Laikoksi. It was first brought from the seventh level of the subterranean region and was quite invisible when in use. The vital spirit of anyone bound by the rope was made to suffer physically the most malignant emaciating fevers.

Durama Imbama kept the olivaceous rope in her house. Once her father, Aringrang Diringrang, in order to perform a sacrificial offering for Walang, bound the spirit of Mahsima Mahbema Malikma Malbanma⁵ with the green olivaceous rope and led it away. He was accosted by Malik Malban who raised a hue and cry against him. The spirit was then suddenly changed into a tree stump. From this a branch was broken off and given to Mahsima Mahbema herself who accordingly re-

gained her former health and beauty. From the tree stump a new tree grew up which came to be known as *Nahmykgron*. In this way the father of Durama Imbama was hindered from performing the sacrificial offering for Walang. He abandoned the hot rope of malady and left the place.

Salgra picked up the rope and gave it to Sahnepa Munepa,⁶ who, seeing no use for it, left it smoking on his hearth. Khatchi Biari⁷ and Misi Susime advised him to hand the rope over to Abet Rengge, the god of fountains and rills. This he did; but the latter, too, kept the rope smoking on his hearth as his predecessor had done. Khatchi Biari and Misi Susime asked him what he did with the olivaceous rope. He replied that he had no use for it.

"What should I do with it?" he asked.

"Use it to bind the daughters of Sahnepa Munepa, namely Mune and Sahne; then thou wilt see its use," said Khatchi Biare.

Abet Rengge bound Munepa's daughters and they became ill with high malignant fever. The father of the afflicted girls asked Khatchi Biare and Misi Susime what he should do to rid his daughters of the terrible fever. They said:

"Prepare a sacrificial altar of *mehga* and *smu* (phool) grass and the tender leaves of the *kimbal* tree (*callicarpa arborea*) and offer a sacrifice of fowls, praying that the bound spirits of Mune and Sahne be set free. Then they will wholly recover."

Sahnepa Munepa sacrificed the fowls on an altar prepared according to the directions of Khatchi Biari and Misi Susime and the fever left Mune and Sahne who regained perfectly their former health and strength. Abet Rengge then kept the rope smoking on his hearth as before.

In the course of time a man named Shangma Dripa Ranja Chondipa⁸ cleared jungle and cut down gigantic primitive trees at Ashang Mithdei Rongrong Bande for *jhum* cultivation; this was the homestead of Abet Rengge where his orange trees were taking root and his refuse heap of rice husks was piling up. Thereby this man unwittingly incurred the wrath of Abet Rengge who bound up the spirits of Mere, Sadang, Dri and Chondi, the children of the offender, who at the time were plucking the tender buds of the *rythimeokchina* and pruning the green leaves of sorrel plants (*Rumex vesicarius*) in his freshly

fallowed *jhum* field. The children became ill with emaciating fever; they shivered with cold and their temperatures soared high; they could neither eat nor drink.

Not knowing the cause of his children's sudden illness, Shangma Dripa went to Chameh-apa Bolagipi Khatchi Biari Rangshi Tokkini,⁹ the diviner and mystic oracle, who essayed a divination by means of two tiny strings tied to the ends of a shoot of *smu* grass in the form of a bow in order to ascertain the cause of the children's illness. At the end of his divination, he said to Shangma Dripa :

"It is Abet Rengge Rakka Ganda who is causing the illness of thy children by binding their spirits with the hot rope of malaria."

At this revelation Shangma Dripa became furious against Abet Rengge. He took up an axe, a long log of stout wood, a basket and fire and scoured up and down the regions round about in search of his enemy. He was determined to wreak vengeance upon the pestilential fiend. He cut open hollow trunks of trees, bared cavernous rocks, and smoked out mighty caves in every land. Abet Rengge fled before his pursuer and hid himself in diverse places. He became a homeless wanderer, experiencing all the privations and vicissitudes of an uncertain existence. Still the pursuer relentlessly dogged the heels of the fugitive. His avenging hands seemed about to descend upon his enemy. At length Shangma Dripa discovered Abet Rengge in a hole on a slope of land near a fountain in Dambo,¹⁰ ferretted him out, bound fast his limbs, put him in his basket, and carried him away with intent to kill him in vengeance. Salgra incidentally came by and interceded for the culprit saying:

"Do not kill him. If thou dost, there will be none to lend charm and enchantment to the wilds; for it is Abet Rengge's presence that lends unearthly stillness, dignity and beauty to the fountains, rocks and lonely spots and sites in the deep forests. If thou killest him, there will be none to prevent people from desecrating every fountain and charming place in the mighty forests. Pray, do not kill him."

Then turning to the captive himself, he continued :

"And thou, Abet Rengge, promise to accept some compensation for despoiling thy homestead. Let the victims free from the malady which thou hast brought about by means of thy

rope. In the future thou wilt only use it in guarding thy dignity and rights with honourable care."

Abet Rengge promised to take the hot rope of malady off the children on condition that the compensation offered him should be in the form of valuable gongs and jewels. Shangma Dripa was about to pay the ransom demanded for the release of his children, when Salgra interrupted :

"In generations to come, the children of men may penetrate inadvertently into thy peaceful abode beside the fountains, rills and rocks. Whenever thou wouldst punish them for such offences, they will offer thee compensatory sacrifices for the damages done to thee. On such occasions the poor, the helpless widows and destitute orphans will not be able to offer thee such valuable gifts. Be thou, Abet Rengge, therefore satisfied with the simple offerings of fowls at the foot of raised altars of the *boltotu* tree (*Mallotus Roxburghiana*), *samnatik* ferns and the leafy boughs of *chahco* tree (*Castanopsis hystrix*). On these altars the leaves of the *boltotu* tree folded into cubes will serve as valuable gongs and the tender buds of the *kimbal* tree (*Calli-carpa arborea*) will take the place of precious jewels."

Abet Rengge assented to Salgra's advice. Then and there he and Shangma Dripa were reconciled and settled down peacefully side by side in great friendship and the best of neighbourliness.

After this Abet Rengge returned to his abode which was partly on land and partly in water. He now dwells in his amphibian house built in an upside down manner with the spiry roots of the *boltotu* tree and ferns close to fountains and rills in the deep forests. He is the god of rills and springs of water. He still wields his hot rope of malady against any offender who trespasses on his domain. Since that time it has become a necessity among the Achiks to offer sacrifices of fowls to propitiate Abet Rengge whenever anyone is afflicted with high, malignant fever.

—Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Village Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

THE FIRST DEATH

In the beginning men and women remained immortal. They were immune from all sorts of illnesses, diseases and fatal accidents, for the very elements which cause illnesses, diseases or bring about fatal mishaps, did not then exist. Death, illness, disease, and fatal accidents were first brought to mankind through the curse, hatred and enmity of the gods and other beings against men for their wilful misdeeds, errors, disobedience and pride.

It was Mehgam Gairipa Mande Singeripa Mehgam Dimrang Chada Gongman Mande Dimrim Mehgam Dimsim¹ who first tasted death among human beings. His mother was known as Alime Dingsime; and his wife, Grimchi Bachari. He was tall and dignified, radiated by health and strength, and was never ill during his whole lifetime. His permanent homestead was beside the deep pool, known as Dengreng Kihtic Wari Chora, in the Simsang River in Achik Ahsong.

One day Mehgam Gairipa went to the Antiracha Ahkanggitel² market at Dimdimpatal Challangagal,³ taking with him his daughter, Gairi Singeri. On their way back from the market this man and his daughter came to the Gijangbra Dilsinggitel River⁴ after passing through Rongtitdru Chamegaru.⁵ A man named Shangma Sangreng Ahning Ranja Dohpa Chiring⁶ was building a fishing weir across this river in order to catch some of the many fish that were swimming down the current. He said to the wayfarers :

"Please do not cross the river in front of my weir. Kindly cross a bit down farther."

Mehgam Gairipa, however, was inclined to be priggish and arrogant. He paid no attention to the fisherman's polite request. With a look of withering scorn verging on contempt, he said to himself disdainfully :

"I am bigger, taller and stronger than this man. What can he, a mere puny wight, do to me?"

So, taking his daughter with him, Mehgam Gairipa swept past the fisherman insolently and waded directly in front of the weir. Consequently, the numerous fish being scared, swam back up the river. Shangma Sangreng was beside himself with anger

against the over-bearing wayfarer. After a single searing flare-up, he returned the hostile stare and cursed him bitterly, saying :

"Let thee fall into the hands of Dina Penareng⁷ or be thrown into the jaws of Wangga Miksimba.⁸ By my own mouth and in the names of Dina Okpet⁹ and Wangga Dimpet,¹⁰ I condemn thee. I curse thee that thou be punished by the gods Sae Dinna,¹¹ Mangga Dinna¹² and Gilne Sae Dohbet.¹³"

These curses were bitter invocations that tigers and malignant spirits should strike them down. Subsequently, Mehgam Gairipa felt terribly frightened at these imprecations and suddenly he felt a shivering sensation creeping through his spine. But he continued on his way.

The wayfarers passed through Sokchuan Bri Meruan Ahding¹⁴ and came to Adil kang Tehmatchi Ponggro,¹⁵ where Rimerinok Kalmedoh-ol Misi Chengmatpa Saljong Chengchipa,¹⁶ the son of Kharupa Chonggalpa¹⁷ and servant of Misi Saljong,¹⁸ had been dreaming ominous dreams the previous night of himself in relation to Mehgam Gairipa. The dreamer related his dreams to his maternal relations, saying :

"Last night I dreamt a portenous dream. In my dream I was being captured alive by Mehgam Gairipa Mande Singeripa who bound my hands and feet fast and bored a hole through my head from ear to ear. Then I was being forcibly dragged away by him to be killed and roasted."

Just as he finished speaking, Mehgam Gairipa and his daughter came upon the dreamer of dreams who apprehensively gasped with astonishment at the sight of them. As the new-comer was about to seize him, the dreamer said :

"I am but the servant of Misi Saljong. By him have I been left here on earth. See, my skin is striped and my mouth is the colour of a ripe melon. Pray, do not lay hands on me. If thou dost, it may not go well with thee."

Mehgam Gairipa insolently replied "*Chase Chahsoaignok, dingse dingsoaignok*"¹⁹ by which he meant to imply that, should something untoward happen to him on that account, he would be ready for it. Then he bound fast the limbs of the captive and bored his head through from ear to ear. This occurred at Ahsra Malenggoka.²⁰

And so the dream of the dreamer came true to the letter. Rimerinok was the patriarchal head of the land-lizards or iguanas.

Up to now, when a person dreams beforehand of the actual events that are to occur immediately after the dream, the Achiks call it *Jumang Matpu*, or *the Land-lizard's dream*.

Taking the captive with them, Mehgam Gairipa and his daughter moved up through Kapera Ginggarap²¹ and encamped at Ahsong Gahgitdik Chiga Changsiram²² on the banks of the Chichura River²³ in the land of Daram Dasing Rakka Ganda.²⁴ At midnight Mehgam Gairipa suddenly fell fatally ill and died. The God Misi Saljong had scourged him for capturing his servant, Rimerinok. This was the first death among mankind since the world began.

Gairi Singeri, daughter of the deceased man, rent the air with her hysterical cries over the death of her father. She stamped the earth frantically in her great despair. In the meantime, the captive made good his escape. Nobody dared to capture him again. The spirit of Mehgam Gairipa undid the bounds of his hands and feet; but the hole which was made sideways through his head remains unchanged up to this very day.

The body of Mehgam Gairipa was taken to his village, bathed with *chubitchi* (the liquid extract of rice-beer) and cremated on a funeral pyre in front of the courtyard of his house by his fellow-villagers. After cremation, his spirit, having assumed a new appearance as fresh as a newly-matured gourd or a newly-kilned earthen pot came back home bringing back the beef and necklaces which had been given him at his death. At that time Grimchi Bachari, taking along with the matrilineal nephew of her husband, was scouring a stream nearby with her *Chekkhe* (triangular fishing basket) in search of prawns. The nephew of the deceased was carrying a fish-creel for her. Meanwhile, at home, her own children were sitting disconsolately on a raised side porch of the house. When they saw the apparition of their father coming towards them, they skipped about with joy and cried out to their mother :

"Father has come home. Father has come home."

The mother shouted back at them; "Your father is already dead and gone. How can he ever come back?"

So saying she solemnly returned to her task of collecting prawns. The spirit felt ashamed at the unmaidenly conduct of his wife in associating alone with his maternal nephew. So, in

anger, he started to Mangru Mangram Chitmag Ahsong Balmang Chiga,²⁵ the temporary residence of departed spirits.

When Grimchi Bachari returned home, she saw the beef and necklaces which had been brought and deposited there by the spirit. She was now fully convinced of the actual return of her spouse; so she decided to pursue him. She took the route which the spirit of her husband travelled on its way to the spirit-land. By and by she came upon a bulrush plant, whose stalk was cut in sport by the spirit as he passed, and she asked it how long ago her husband had gone that way. The bulrush plant said :

"It is long ago that he passed this way. Lo, my stalk, which he lopped off for fun as he passed by, is already sending forth new shoots."

Grimchi Bachari trudged on and on and saw Ahtakmeh-a Jongtak Phante²⁶ who was up a tree, the branches of which had been completely pruned off. She enquired of him about her husband, and how long ago he last came that way. Atakmeh-a answered :

"I saw him passing this way a long time ago. Lo, the branches of this tree, which I began lopping off as he came by, is now just completed."

The wife toiled on her journey, and, after a while, she saw a spider hanging himself cosily in the newly-tangled mesh of his web. She questioned him as to how long ago her husband passed that way. The spider replied :

"It is long ago your husband passed this way. Lo, my web, which I began to rig up as he came by is already finished."

She continued her pursuit and asked the stretch of sand which skirted her path how long ago her husband stepped on it. The sand answered :

"It is a long time ago that he came treading on me. Lo, his foot-prints on me are already matted with cobwebs."

Grimchi Bachari trudged onward and met a crab whom she asked how long ago her husband came through that place. The crab said :

"It is a long time ago that he came by this way, Lo, the cavernous riparian home of mine, which I began excavating as he came by, is now ready for occupation."

Onward the woman sped up a mountain pass and came

to the resting place of the Ghost Bhegia²⁷ and the breathing-place of Khatchi Chahnapa.²⁸ By and by she came upon a scorpion and asked it how long ago her husband came past that way. The scorpion rejoined :

"It is a long time ago that he came past this place. Lo, my house, which I began to build while he came by, is now wholly completed."

The wife continued her pursuit to the clearing of Bonepa Janepa.²⁹ He was felling trees in his *jhum* clearing. She asked him how long ago her husband came thither last. He responded :

"It is a long time ago that he passed through this place. Lo, the trees, which I began chopping down as he came by, are nearly dried up and their leaves are already shrivelled."

Grimchi Bachari persevered on her journey, keeping herself on the track of her husband past the place of Mehmang Misal Chahram³⁰ and Boldak Matchu Kharam,³¹ where ghosts used to tether their bulls to a *boldak* tree (*Schima wallichii*), and came to the Chidimak Chianggal stream,³² where afterwards the ghosts used to bathe, washing away all dirt and earthly impurities from themselves. There on a mound she viewed the pleasant country of Racha Ahsong³³ and the majestic waters of the Nengbachiga,³⁴ looming large in the far distance.

Undismayed and undeterred by all the discouraging replies to her queries, Grimchi Bachari persistently dragged on her pursuit until she came to the limbo of Mangru Mangram. There she overtook her husband and prayed him to return home with her. Mehgam Gairipa declined, saying :

"You did not welcome me as your husband and your beloved when I last came home. I endorse your choice of my own matrilineal nephew to remarry after me. Let him marry you rightly, and let him preserve all my earthly belongings and heirlooms and faithfully perform every domestic function as a householder and your second husband in my place. Let all my duties and responsibilities devolve on him. Let him complete my unfinished tasks. If you and my matrilineal relations perform all needful funeral and post-funeral rites over me and set up memorial posts for me, I will be reborn into the same motherhood, which is dearer and greater than anything else I had while in the land of the living. But I will return no more, as I am now, with you. I must finish alone my journey

for a while to come. Be assured, my beloved, we shall meet again and again in forms yet unmoulded and in states not yet existent; yea, in the course of numberless rolling ages, we shall meet again times without number.

"Now return home and do as I have bidden you. Mind your duties conscientiously and our children well. Do return home and let me resume my long journey to my final destination."

Grimchi Bachari wept bitterly for a long time at the thought of having to return home alone, meanwhile gazing steadfastly at the receding form of her beloved husband's immortal spirit. Finally she went home, and, in willing regard to her late husband's wishes, she married his matrilineal nephew.

Ever since that day it has become an established custom among the Achiks that a man, if he be the matrilineal nephew and lawful heir to his father-in-law's house, according to the matrilineal usage, can marry the wife of his matrilineal uncle or his father-in-law's after his death. Although marriage to one's own mother-in-law may not be actually right in the strict physical sense, the lawful heir or son-in-law is, after the death of his father-in-law, to all intents and purposes, duly regarded as the husband of his mother-in-law or any other wife, if there be any, of his late father-in-law. Such a son-in-law must be the direct matrilineal nephew of the deceased father-in-law and is called *Nokkrom* of the house according to the Achik custom.

Nok means "house" and *Krom* is "a stone" put over the bones of the dead on the spot where cremation took place. It is taboo to remove the "*krom*" from the place where it was originally put. This custom of the Achiks originated after the death of Mehgam Gairipa Mande Singeripa, the first man to die, long, long ago.

—Told by Gongsin Shangma Dawa, Nokma,
at Village Marakgre, District Garo Hills.

THE STORY OF THE MONKEYS

In olden days the common brown short-tailed monkeys, known as the *makkras* or *amaks* once settled in a place known as Dikabri Thimbang Ahding Bolmariting Amak Thengthang¹ in the country of Rongchu.² Here they cultivated the fields like men and sowed rice, millet and corn.

Now, at this time Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa, a wealthy god in the celestial regions, had a fine-looking bitch named Waenggil Wachenggil Thonggro Manggisim. The monkeys saw the comely bitch and desired to take her to their village. So, one day, when Misi Apilpa asked them for a loan of some millet and corn, they said to him :

"If thou wilt give us thy bitch, we will give thee six basketsful of millet and six basketsful of corn."

The god bound up the hands and feet of his dog, handed her over to the monkeys and told them to let her loose in a closed house. With joy the happy monkeys led the bitch home, put her into the largest house in their village, and bolted all the doors of the dwelling securely. Then they congregated with their fellow-villagers in the house to watch the new beast. After a while the largest monkey in the crowd boldly let the dog loose. In a moment she leaped to her feet, barked furiously and ran amok killing as many monkeys as she could lay teeth on. The rest scrambled out of the house in confusion and fright, breaking down doors in their zeal to make good their escape.

After this incident the whole village was terror-stricken because of the presence of the dog among them. The monkeys found that it would be impossible for them go on with their cultivation in such a place. They unanimously agreed that they must needs abandon the village, since they felt that they were not sufficiently armed to cope with the savage bitch. So they moved *en masse* to Ahsong Resuche Chiga Badaka³ in the land of Petchong.⁴ Here they mustered strong on the top of a massive rock which stood in the middle of a stream ; then their leaders decided to settle in Ahsong Nodesol Chiga Thokhesor,⁵ which they did under a white king of their own.

On account of the hasty retreat which the monkeys had made from their native village, they were unable to bring along with them any rice, millet and corn seeds. Now they could not carry on *jhum* cultivation as before; so they had to live on wild fruit, roots and leaves. Therefore, it was but natural that they should view with envy the *jhum* cultivation of Misi Apilpa on the hill of Nanggera Dohmesal.^a They visited it again when the crops were mellow, and looked with joy at the grains of rice, millet and corn growing there abundantly. The sight caused them to shed copious tears; for it brought back to them the memory of their former home and their own like crops.

Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa heard their sobs and took pity on them. He allowed the monkeys to partake of the paddy, millet and corn that grew near the border of his fields. This they readily did. Ever since that time the common short-tailed monkeys are accustomed to pillage paddy, millet and corn in the fields of men.

—Told by Alasingh Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

BONEPA AND MISIPA

Once in olden days a patriarch of Mande, named Bonepa, had been clearing jungle at a place known as Denggadare Silkhongkhante Misi Kokdok Arapetchok, cutting down huge trees, in order to make the whole place fit for *jhum* (shifting) cultivation. A protracted drought was prevailing in the land then. As the seasonal rain was long overdue, he stopped the work of clearing jungle and felling of tree at the place and took a journey to the land of Dikrang Dikchang Chende Dodil in order to visit his niece there, who was named Mejini Mechik Bangsni Bi'sa. Now, this niece of Bonepa kept a wonderful fountain of water of life at a place known as Basinaja Gimbija. The water of this fountain was also oraculous. If a quantity of the water of this fountain was kept in an earthen pitcher, it used to overflow by itself out of the vessel all on a sudden as soon as rain was near at hand, and dried by itself in a moment at the approach of sunshine.

Mejini Mechik warmly welcomed her maternal uncle, Bonepa, and said to him, "Dear revered maternal uncle, you have come to me after what seemed to me an age, as if you have been resurrected from the dead, or, as if you have just been recovered from long serious illness. What could I offer you, dear maternal uncle, to eat and drink? You have just come to my humble home only to starve yourself."

Bonepa Jarepa Nitepa, for that was the full name of the patriarch replied :

"O my beloved niece, I am overjoyed to see you in the brightest of health and spirits. I have just come on a customary visit to see how you fare."

Mejini Mechik offered her maternal uncle the best of cooked rice and curry for his meal and the choicest *chubitchi* (rice-beer) for his drink. She killed a fat castrated pig with white sides for him. She continued to serve him with the best of food and the choicest of rice-beer throughout his sojourn in her house ; for she was immensely rich.

At the time of entertainment Mejini Mechik asked her maternal uncle, "Have you been ready to burn your clearing?"

Bonepa answered, "Not yet. I have not as yet seen any sign of the advent of rain."

Mejini Mechik continued, "The water of life which I am keeping in an earthen pitcher is about to overflow out of its brim. It is a sure sign that rain is very near at hand."

On learning from his niece about the approach of rain, Bonepa bade adieu to her and suddenly returned to his own homestead. He said to his worthy neighbour and compatriot Misipa :

"The rainy season is very near at hand. The time to burn the clearings for *jhum-kheti* has come. I am soon going to burn my clearing."

Misipa replied, "The water which I keep in my earthen vessel has not as yet indicated the approach of rainy season. No, the season to burn clearings has not come." Saying so, Misipa went on clearing jungle and felling down huge primitive trees.

Bonepa, feeling so sure of the approach of rainy season, set fire to his vast clearing. Nambok Me'a Namsang Phante, the favourite son of Misipa, as he sat perched high on the leafless branch of a completely pruned tree in the clearing of his father, saw the smoke coming over the stumps and the standing trunks of big bare trees, and felt elated to see the strange sight.

It was time for him to run at once, but, instead of instant flight for dear life, he, as he lay perched on the topmost branch of the pruned tree, sang a merry catch of the approaching splendid, powerful monster in the following strain :

"Sillangare riprangde awade
Skal basu bangiangde biade,
Nio nithobiake uade,
Dono krabiake biade ;
Na'a gitok wa'rikkat,
Na'a sre thonggitchak :
Asirangni me'ade,
Dingsirangni Phantede."

That is,

"Yonder comes the being, precipitant and light-footed,
The monster with bright flowing tufts on his head,

"Tis beautiful to look at,
Exceeding fit to be let alive ;
Thou, a husky-throated one,
Thou, red-tongued one :
Thou, a male one of Asirang,
Thou, a young one of Dingsirang."

While he was thus singing gaily, the fire from the clearing of Bonepa quickly spread on to that of Misipa. In a little time he felt himself unendurably fumigated, lost his foot-hold and was soon burnt into a cinder.

After his death Nambok Me'a was renamed Agreng Asaljing. Misipa grew extremely angry with Bonepa on account of the tragic end of his son and said to him :

"As a result of your hasty, reckless action, my beloved son is dead. I shall of necessity have to wage a war on you. A state of hostility henceforward exists between you and me."

Bonepa Jarepa retorted :

"Had I not told you beforehand that the season to burn the *jhum* clearings has come? Why did you completely ignore my words? Why have you shown utter disrespect towards me?"

On the next morning of Bonepa Jarepa's burning of his *jhum* clearing, came a heavy down-pour of rain. Misipa was meditating vengeance upon Bonepa Jarepa. Just when Misipa and Bonepa met again next time with set purpose to wrangle with each other, a holy band of celestial brothers, namely, Misi Susime, Khatchi Biari and Aijangga incidentally came by and seeing them at logger-heads, said to them :

"Thou, Misipa, forgive Bonepa Jarepa, and, Thou, Bonepa Jarepa, think no evil of Misipa any more. Be ye not at daggers drawn. Pick up the bones of Nambok Me'a Namsang Phante and use them as stakes in demarcating your own respective *jhum* cultivations. Out of the piece of his bones there will grow a new plant, known as *mendu* or *landu* (*Cystisus cajan*) and a creeper, known as beanstalk, which will bear seeds and multiply, serving you as visible limits to your respective *jhum* cultivations for generations to come. Do so and remain at peace. War brings you nothing but destruction and ruin."

Bonepa Jarepa and Misipa were thus reconciled to each other then and there. The charred pieces of bones of Nambok Me'a were picked out from the ground and used by the

patriarchs in fixing out the boundaries of their respective *jhum* cultivations. Out of those pegged pieces of bones of Nambok Me'a there grew in due course golden beanstalks and silvery *mendu* plants. Ever since, the Achiks, in following their laudable examples of sweet reconciliation and thoughtful neighbourliness, have been using the *mendu* plants up to this day in setting up boundaries to their *jhum* cultivations in the heroic Achik Ahsong.

—Told by Alasingh Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

THE SHELL-LESS SNAIL

The Achiks call the shell-less horned snail *gap*. The original name of *gap* was Kena Elangpa Malga Udangpa. At first he established his home at A'song Meri Pahal Salgrako Okste Galram Menggomako Jakskil Raram, that is, the Hill-Country of Meri, where the Umbilical Cord of Salgra was thrown down and where the progenitor of Cats got her nails pared. After his death, his immortal spirit took up its residence at a place known as A'song Ahdol Chiga Chikasin Eru Skal Samrong Dagal A'song Wa'ambong Chiga Wa'timbong Megadop Samarop. While he was staying here, *Gap* was called Dengroma Dengchopa.

At the time of death of Susimema Sangkidoma, which took place at a spot, known as Dapsimi Samsimeri Boltotru Chamegaru, with a view to carve out a *Kima* (memorial post) after the image of Dengroma Dengchopa, Susime commanded that he should be brought back into this world of living beings.

When Dengroma Dengchopa was actually brought back into the world of living beings, a heroic personage, known as Ramrokon Sinthang Debisa, cut down a gigantic *silk-cotton* tree (*Bombax Malabaricum*) which was growing on Dambalbri Phalwang Ahding, and carved a *Kima* exactly after the image of Dengroma Dengchopa in sacred memory of Susimema Sangkildoma. For at this time, a *mandal* tree (*Erythrina subarosa*), with only one leaf, and a *silk-cotton* tree, with only one branch, which were growing on Dambalbri Phalwang Ahding, were the only trees found in the whole world.

When this carved-out *Kima* was being conveyed to the house of death, with full ceremonies, a heroine, known as Arim Jatakkim Sirim Mikkongjim, who belonged to the Dikgil clan, performed ceremonial dances, all along the way, with gay abandon, imitating the skips and charging jumps of the tiger. She was the first since the world began to dance during the funeral ceremonial procession.

—Told by Alasingh Shangma Rongmuthu
at Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

THE TAILOR BIRD

Ringra Racha Balsa Gitel Kona Racha Sikna Gitel was the patriarch of the tailor birds, known as *Do'pinchep* to the Achiks. He was once the biggest and heaviest of all the creatures in the whole world. He was so big and heavy that he could not sit on anything for a long time. Beneath his weight the earth sank. Any rock on which he rested was immediately pushed into the earth. Everything gave way to the enormous weight of the patriarch of tailor birds. The result of all this was that the wretched bird was forced to keep flying as long as he could.

At length, unable to endure any longer the agony of sustaining his tremendous weight most of the time on his wings, the miserable tailor bird made his way to the abode of Bahbra Dakgipa Rugipa Magipa Jagring, the Mother-Goddess, and earnestly besought her to reduce the size of his body and thus relieve him of his intolerable predicament.

The bird's prayer was granted and his enormous body was cut into pieces by the goddess and distributed to other creatures. His thighs were given to the elephant; the flesh of his head to the buffalo; portions of his neck to the bison and the bullock. Ultimately the patriarchal tailor bird was reduced to one of the smallest birds. His descendants remain so, up to this very day; but they are most happy and contented to be so.

—Told by Shanon Shangma Tegitdi
at Village Dingrang-Bawegiri, District Garo Hills.

THE MAKING OF STONES AND VEGETATION

When Manè Philtè, Mother Earth, was in her infancy, there were no rocks and stones, and the waters were not divided. So Nosthu Nophanthu commanded the spirits, the two Gorang brothers and the two Patrang uncles, to sow the seeds of stones, rocks, and cliffs.

At that time the two Gorang brothers and the two Patrang uncles were but naughty youngsters, playing with their seeds of *gila* (*Entada scandens*) and their fishing hooks. Their mother was known as Simin Kamin. Soon they came of age when they no longer cared for their playthings; their voices became husky and their hair began to grow long and shaggy. At this time they took their cue from Nosthu Nophanthu, and, beginning at Ahsong Rongribo Chiga Mikchido,¹ they set about the task of scattering the seeds of stones, rocks and cliffs all over the earth.

Then the partriarch, Bamin Racha Sojon Gitel, entreated the sowers of seeds to let some places alone, saying that, if they should continue to indiscriminately sow the seeds of stones, rocks and cliffs over the whole surface of the earth, no one would be able to plough the fields with buffaloes or make dams for fishing and for storing water. But the brothers and uncles would not heed his words. At this Bamin Racha grew angry, chased the sowers far and wide, and at last overtook them at Ahratcha Rongbare where he threw them on the ground with their faces towards the sky, pierced their legs through, chained them together and let them go their way. But for the timely intervention of Bamin Racha there would have been no plains at all.

Afterwards the Gorang brothers and Patrang uncles sowed the seeds of stones, rocks and cliffs as far south as Donari Waknachil.² They all sprang up to their respective sizes and shapes in one night. Soon the earth was full of these jagged stones, massive rocks, and stately cliffs. But it was still quite barren; for as yet, there were no trees, plants, grass or herbs on the earth at all. So Nosthu Nophanthu said :

"It is not good for Manè Philtè, Mother Earth, to remain naked."

The goddess then ordered the sisters, Tikre Tikse and Gatre Gatse, to sow the seeds of trees, plants, herbs and grass of different varieties and sizes over the surface of the whole earth. The two diligent sisters then beginning from Baminsonggitcham Dolja-ahgitok, set forth to scatter the seeds of trees, bushes, shrubs, herbs, plants and grass over the face of the earth. And so it happened at this time that Mother Earth was first clad in her luxuriant vegetation.

—Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

THE EARTHQUAKE

At the time when Nosthu Nophantu¹ gave birth to the Earth, Mother Earth was unstable due to her moving about all over her surface with no definite direction. The earth was then neither firm; nor did she hold water within bounds.

Therefore Aphitpa Agopa,² Phitrang and Gorang³ scattered the seeds of rocks and the germs of stones all over Mother Earth, thus making her stable and dividing her surface into parts and cleavages.

When the rocks and stones grew into various shapes and sizes, Ahnma Ahdindin Chi-inma Chidindin⁴ cut the surface of the Mother into furrows and the form of ribs and chest. Into these newly fashioned furrows Mother Water freely flowed. The Achiks call this accumulation of water Aema Ditema,⁵ Songduma,⁶ Sagalma,⁷ Ebikbik Esiksik,⁸ Siksikma,⁹ and Wilwillma.¹⁰ All these formations required an immense number of ages to take place.

The Achik forefathers said that an Earthquake, known as *Banggri*, is caused at times by the violent motion of water caused by the terrific avalanches of enormous stones upon this accumulation of water from the mountain of rocks in Terenga.¹¹ These stones are said to be tossed up from inside the mountain by the constant growth of rocks forming new mountains.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

THE FIRST TREE

The goddess Nosthu Nophanthu first put the mass out of which the Earth was to be fashioned, into a bowl-shaped gong as a receptacle. Mixed with the grains of earth in that mass was a single seed which had been created along with the Earth.

At the completion of the work of forming Mother Earth, the seed germinated into a tree called Siram Racha Bolkhing Gitel.¹ This was the first tree to be seen on the earth.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Garo Hills.

THE BIRTH OF THE BANYAN TREE

When Thimbori Thimbangbang Natore Bandildil went to the forest to fetch firewood and leaves, she trod unsuspectingly on the abode of the spirit, Khatchi Rangshi, who, on that account, wantonly ravished her. She became pregnant and ultimately gave birth to a female child named Giting Ringe Ringse Rani Dingse Dingse.¹

Kharupa Chonggalpa Phawangpa Birapa² who was an adept in the art of divination tried to find out by a thread and bow how the mother conceived the child and gave birth to it without a husband. He discovered that she had committed fornication with the Spirit Khatchi Rangshi and so gave birth to Gitting Dingse.

One day the child was left under the care of Nokol Simareng Rori Japilsil.³ Saron, the uncle of the child, warned the care-taker :

"Do not go deep downstream with the child. Do not play with the child in watery and moist places on the plains."

Nokol Simareng, however, did not heed the warning. He amused the child, carrying it on his back and running about. At length they reached a stream nearby where the caretaker delighted the child by fashioning human figures out of sand and adorning them with ear-rings made from *wakme* creepers (*Mucuna bracteata*) as they sat on the sandy beach near a dark deep pool. This beach was the resort of Meenpa Rongdingpa.

Before long a leaf shot forth from the child's head and a root protruded from her foot into the soft sandy soil. Nokol Simareng went to the mother of the child and told her what had happened to her daughter. The distraught woman screamed :

"Oh, I will uproot my child. I will remove my darling."

But her uncle Saron sternly forbade her to do this, warning her that if she acted so rashly the child would immediately die. The mother obeyed his warning and watched her child with aching heart. All day she stood and stared. At nightfall, in tears and sorrow, she wearily retreated to her home. Shortly after, the girl was transformed into a full banyan tree—young and beautiful.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Garo Hills.

MARRIAGE OF THE BANYAN TREE AND THE DOHSURAE BIRD

One day Timbori went to her child who had been transformed into a banyan tree and said :

"Thousands of birds like cormorants, hornbills, toucans, cranes, storks, adjutants, and many others will not come flying to you for protection unless you marry a husband. Let me then propose a bridegroom for you. Will you marry Salae Salake, the Spirit of the Sun?"

Giting Dinge answered : "If I marry him, my hair will be singed and coiled up red, and my spine will be bent down. No, mother, I will not be wedded to him."

Timbori then said : "Would you like to be espoused to Jaru-Meh-a Jabalphanthe Okkhuagsi Jahpatchongsi, the Wind-god ?

The daughter replied : "If I be united to him in wedlock, my leg will be violently twisted and my body turned awry. No, mother, I shall not be married to him."

Next, Timbori proposed : "Will you marry Sretonggitchak Gitokwahrikkat, the Fire-god ?"

Giting Dinge said : "If he becomes my husband, my whole body will be burnt over. No, mother I will not be united to him."

Timbori now asked her daughter if she would be pleased to marry Banggriajimpa Chonggri Khaljimpa, the Earthquake-god. The transformed girl replied : "If I marry him I shall always be startled out of my wits. He will make me always grumble. With him I shall not be able to stand life for long."

The mother then implored her to marry Bil Goera Jakbalnisi Chelarongdot Jakthongmangot, the god of Thunder and Lightning. Again the daughter protested, saying : "If I marry him my body will be slit asunder. No, mother, I will not be wedded to him."

Finally Timbori said with great earnestness : "As you have already refused to be married to any of these stronger persons, I will now propose Airokrak Wachitoktak, the Rain-god, who

is of a gentle nature, to be your husband. What do you say to that?"

Giting Dinge remained silent for a while, then she bowed her head in complete acquiescence, saying: "Mother, you have now made a right choice for me. Him I will gladly marry and love dearly."

Before long Giting Dinge Rane Dingje was wedded to Airokrak Wachitoktak with much pomp and dignity. Both husband and wife loved each other dearly and showed much happiness in their wedded life. They grew rich and prosperous. Hundreds of thousands of birds came flying to the bride's home to pay homage to her. Out of her great abundance she fed them sumptuously.

Now, *Dohsurae*, a kind of speckled thrush, one of the servants of Salgra, saw Giting Dinge looming verdurous in the distance and thousands of birds flying to her. Then and there he decided to visit her. He did so without bothering to get his master's permission. At this Salgra grew terribly angry. He drove him away and cursed him saying:

"Let you be a dweller of the dark, jungle ravines. Let you take shelter on small bushes and shrubs. Let you stutter as you speak. Let you speak. Let your utterances be pregnant with premonition of impending calamities and disasters to human beings."

Ever since that time, *Dohsurae* and her descendants have become small, tiny birds. To the Achiks they are known as "event-tellers". Giting Dinge Rane Dingje still remains as the banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*). Her descendants are scattered wherever monsoon rains fall.

—Told by Totim Shangma Nengmija
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills

END OF THE FIRST TREE

Susimema Sangkildoma,¹ the goddess, who is the common mother of all plants and living beings, died at that time when Mother Earth was made firm and Mother Water was caused to flow in definite channels. Every living creature in the whole world came to attend her funeral rites. On that day Meen Mechik Rongling Tira,² the wife of Gingbo Ah-igija Chalo Mahsigija,³ said to her husband :

"Pray, let me go to the place where the obsequies for Susimema Sandkildoma are being held."

Gingbo replied : "You may go there, of course ; but bear this in mind : Every living being will be present at the ceremony. Now, I have often noticed your casting amorous glances at and exchanging questionable smiles with Rengra Balsa Sriri Budhi,⁴ Manna Kanga,⁵ Saron Benga.⁶ They are a gallant trio, no doubt ; but I do not want you to exchange further smiles or words with them. Further, do not spend the night in that place. Drink in silence ; eat with caution and keep due decorum while you are there. Tarry no longer than is necessary. Come back home quietly."

With these words of warning Gingbo dispatched his wife to the funeral rites of Susimema Sangkildoma.

When Meen Mechik arrived at her destination, she attracted the attention of Rengra Balsa. Her facial beauty, her radiant eyes, her slender hands and legs, in short, the perfect symmetry of her whole body appealed to his artistic eye. He desired to have the beautiful damsel for himself. He called out merrily to one of his friends :

"Go, and give the best wine to the fair newcomer. Gently and steadily force her to drink the tastiest extract of wine. Yea, offer her politely the best wine in the best gourd-ladle befitting her rank and beauty. Aren't we fortunate that such a winsome creature should come to grace this occasion. Go, offer her more and more wine."

Meen Mechink, forgetting her husband's admonitions, ate and drank more than enough. By nightfall she was dead drunk. While she was dead asleep from the stupor of the wine, Rengra

Balsa playfully challenged Amak Meh-a Khale Phante⁷ to tattoo her by means of a bluish mixture known as *chirama khalema aldama thangsikma*.⁸ The latter accepted the challenge and tattooed her. When Meen Mechik woke up, she saw the unsightly blemish on her body, and blurted out in rage :

"This playing of pranks on me is indecent and improper. I cannot forgive the rash perpetrator of this mischievous foul joke. I will tell my husband what has happened. I will show the scandalous marks to my spouse."

With these words the angered damsel ran home swiftly to her husband and narrated to him all that had befallen her. When she showed him the tattoo marks, Gingbo Ah-igija became furious with anger. Taking his *milam* (two edged sword) in his hands, he rushed out of the house and hurried to the place where his wife was insulted. With a view to finding out the real culprit, Gingbo closely interrogated all the male members present. When this, however, failed to produce any result, he challenged each one to prove his innocence by taking a solemn oath and biting the blade of his *milam*. One by one, the males came forward and swore innocence by biting the *milam*. As they were all guiltless, they took the oath with an easy conscience. But Amak Meh-a, smarting under the sense of his guilt, recoiled from the sacred oath and would not come forward to bite the sword. Accordingly, guilt was fixed on him. Perceiving the menacing attitude and infuriated looks of Gingbo, Amak Meh-a took to his heels without further delay. He finally hid himself under the armpit of Siram Racha Bolking Gitel, the first tree, who graciously welcomed the fugitive and openly offered him protection. Gingbo said to the tree :

"You are concealing under your armpit Amak Meh-a Khale Phante. Pray, give him up. I will fight him and kill him."

Siram Racha proudly replied : "Fie, do you challenge me to a fight, too? You are a contemptible creature. Don't you know that I originated along with Mother Earth herself? Don't you see hosts of huluk apes, langur monkeys, squirrels in my branches, as well as droves of cormorants, cranes, adjutants, toucans, horn-bills and hawks at my top? Don't you notice the hundreds of buffaloes dozing in my shade and the numberless geckos shouting from my armpits? They are my guards of honour. What! Do you, a mere creature born only yesterday

wish to combat me ? Do you threaten a guest of mine ? Don't you realize that I would have afforded even you the same welcome were you the hunted instead of the hunter ? Depart to your home and disturb me no further. You should discern that I am the common refuge of all beings in times of need."

With anger in his heart Gingbo listened to the insulting words of the first tree, and vowed vengeance on mighty Siram Racha, too. Accordingly he did not waste his time in needless dejection and fruitless moping. Instead he said to himself :

"I will go at once and seek the help of my paternal relations. With their assistance and support in this hour of humiliation, I will return and defeat this formidable enemy. I must go ; I will not submit myself tamely before this insolent might."

Therefore, Gingbo Ah-igija went to the abode of his powerful relations, the most famous of whom were Malik Malbin,⁹ Sisha Remba,¹⁰ Balwa Enok,¹¹ Mithdei Khongthok,¹² Impret Khingro,¹³ Stil Ronggrim,¹⁴ Khising Phingweng¹⁵ and Matram Chireng.¹⁶ To these he told his tale of woe and humiliation. They all sympathised with him and agreed to render him all possible aid within their power. So in a short time, a terrible assault was made on the common enemy and Siram Racha was overthrown. Her branches were severed and her trunk split lengthwise.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

THE GANGMA TREE

Bolchu, the simul cotton tree, was the husband of the *Gangma* tree (*Elaeo-carpus aristatus*) and the maternal uncle of Salgra. On the day of the death of Susime's mother, Salgra ordered *Bolchu* to descend to the plains, dales and slopes of land as an act of expiation for her death. The tree was to be employed in the cremation of the body of Susime's mother. Therefore, *Bolchu* shifted his seat from the summits of the mighty mountains to the flat plains below.

It was a great blow for the *Gangma* tree to be parted from her spouse the *Bolchu* tree. She sorely bemoaned the separation and piteously lamented her eternal widowhood. She cast a long lingering look at the retreating figure of her departing mate. The figure of *Bolchu* grew smaller and smaller to her sight as he receded farther and farther away from her. When the distance between them rendered his figure hardly visible to her, *Gangma* lifted herself up on tiptoe to get a better view of her separated spouse and watched in despair, for a long time. With copious tears flowing freely from her eyes, she wistfully peered after *Bolchu* until he disappeared completely from view.

As *Gangma* stood there entranced in loving thought of her husband, from the soles of her feet roots began to shoot forth deep down into the earth and leaves sprouted from her head and hands. She was turned into a tree herself with stilted roots. Her descendants are still known as the *Gangma* trees which are buttressed at the bases. They are found in the forests and hills of Achik Ahsong.

The *Bolchu* tree, her husband, was employed in the erection of the funeral pyre of Susime's mother. During the cremation of the corpse, the tree sizzled in the flames, but was not consumed.

—Told by Dingban Marak Raksam
at Village Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

SAMMISI SAMJANGGI

Khatchi and Indik were both exceedingly beautiful damsels. One day, thinking of the magic millet called Sammisi Samjanggi,¹ Khatchi made a vow :

"I will marry no man other than the one who will bring me some Sammisi Samjanggi. If there be no one to bring it to me, I shall live and die husbandless".

Now, Sammisi Samjanggi exists in a place, the way to which is beset with various temptations, great difficulties, and manifold obstacles. It is eagerly sought after, since it is capable of bestowing everlasting life, perpetual youthfulness, great strength, and freedom from fatigue and suffering, upon its possessor. It also preserves the body of its owner from decay.

The seekers after Sammisi Samjanggi are legion. Thousands of men who daily go in quest of the precious fruit, perish on the way ere they reach their cherished goal. Some are being reborn as lower animals ; others are being reincarnated as trees, plants, and herbs.

The person who wishes to obtain Sammisi Samjanggi must make the journey to its abode along the one and only path leading to it. This way is long and tortuous ; but there is no other. It leads down the subterranean region through the dark and dismal swamps of Indecision ; and over the rough and stony hills of Disappointment. There looms in the direct path of the seeker, the jagged cliffs of Discouragement that seem well nigh insurmountable. Below them is the ever-yawning abyss of Lost Hope. Innumerable are the side-tracks and cross-roads of Temptation, leading nowhere but back to the dreadful abyss. Ever and anon one finds rivers of Sorrow to be crossed.

Now Khatchi, in her great eagerness for possessing the coveted fruit, sent her handsome lover, Dikki,² to fetch some Sammisi Samjanggi for her. He took with him his worthy younger brother, Bandi,² and set forth on the perilous journey.

As the two dauntless heroes passed through the subterranean region, they were warmly welcomed and cordially greeted by Ahning Chire Chining Nore,³ a marvelously beautiful and bewitching woman. She is the guardian of the front door of

the first entrance to the notorious pathway leading to the abode of the Sammisi Samjanggi. Her dwelling place is known as *Nangija Ongchengani Biap*,⁴ that is, *the place of the Origin of Evil*. Here there are no judges. Nor are there penalties and fines for those among its inhabitants who commit even the most heinous crimes. The husband of Ahning Chire Chining Nore is named Duri Songsong Jakhing Thekam.⁵

When Dikki and Bandi presented themselves at the gate, the bewitching custodian duly offered them two beautiful chairs and entreated them to be seated. But the heroes refused to comply with her request; for they knew that if they sat on the chairs they themselves would be changed into chairs immediately. They did not even exchange words with Ahning Chire Chining Nore; for they were well aware that by so doing they would have been turned into ferocious beasts.

That is all we know of Dikki and Bandi; for they never came back from their perilous journey. They are generally presumed to have been lost. Or will they some day return? Who can say?

Khatchi, the beloved of Dikki and Indik the beloved of Bandi, became immortal virgins, known as the celestial damsels. They are still waiting for the worthy brothers in the hope that they are yet alive and will some day return bringing with them the coveted Sammisi Samjanggi. When the heroes, Dikki and Bandi, do come back to the earth, the beautiful damsels, Khatchi and Indik, will also return to dwell with them as their respective wives. Then will begin the era of prosperity; when truth, justice, love, peace, and happiness will reign forever on this earth.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

WERAM JAMBAL

In ancient days an old road from Rongbal Songsak¹ passed through the depression at the foot of Weram Jambal² Hillock in Rongjeng Jambalgittim, leading to the very ancient market at Dimbilbri Phalwang Ahding, in Achik Ahsong.

In those days there was a gigantic banyan tree growing on the edge of a solid piece of massive black rock on Weram Jambal Hillock, facing the East. Beautiful women used to swing for pleasure on the spiry roots which hung like long tentacles from the main branches of this gigantic banyan tree.

As the beautiful women, with their long lovely tresses hanging loosely, used to swing on the dangling roots, they were accustomed to sing bewitching songs of love and romance. The beautiful women who thus swung by the hanging roots were known as Sikme, Balme, Tikre, Simikma, Badoma, Gaema and Judongma.

The burden of one of their romantic songs was as follows :

"Jambal a'chotchidingko gamesa

Kokha dasil manpara ;

Go-go-o-o-o-go

Go-o-o-o-go.

Jambal chikongdikko satesa

Na'ek bengbek manpara ;

Go-o-o-go-go.....

Go-o-go-go-gogaea—go.

Angse Na'a Khawara Matbilranga,⁶

Bija dilwe ra'babo ;

Angse, Tosea Simchiranga,⁷

Sokmil bakchong akbabo ;

Chame Incheng Chirenga,⁸

Go-o-go-o.

Jojong Soot Ramjenga,

Chame Tesang Galwanga,

Go-o-go.

Tolwakolgranga, senokthang, go-o-o.
Chelma Gitchaksranga,⁹ panokthang, go-o-o.
Binipa Singgipara,¹⁰ go-o-o.
Toromsi Jasrea,¹¹ go-o-o.
Ganggua Chiduar-a,¹² go-o-o.
Go-o-o-gogaca-go-go-o-go.

That is,

"While cultivating on the slanting land
On the Hill of Weram Jambal,
We bought costly red silk puggrees,
Go-go-o-o—o-go.³

While we baled out the water of a little pool
Of the Jambal rill,⁴ we were blessed with a creelful
Of tiny fishes and prawns ;
Go-o-o-go-go-.....
Go-o-go-go-gogaea-go.⁵

Thou, dear, my husband, Khawa Matbilrang,⁶
 Bring hivesful of honey,
 Bring, thou, bunches of edible fruits of thorny cane
 (*Calamus viminalis*),
 Thou, my husband, Tose Simchirang;⁷
 Thou, my beloved, Incheng Chireng,⁸
 Go-o-, go-o-.

Thou, younger brother, Soot Ramjeng,
Thou my sweetheart, Tesang Galwang,
Go-o-o-go.

Thou hollow-teethed husband, Tolwakolgrang, go-o-o.
Thou, red-breasted patriarch, sturdy and wise, go-o-o ;
Thou, Binipa Singgipa, go-o-o.
Thou, Toromsi Jasre, go-o-o ;
Thou, Ganggua Chiduar, go-o-o,
Go-o-o-gogaea-go-go-o-go."

In those days aphrodisiac herbs, known as *Bongera* or *Mongera*, *Singsingbal* and other love-exciting plants grew and

blossomed in rich profusion round about the gigantic banyan tree and up along the edge of the massive piece of the black rock. Any traveller, however stern and heart-hardened he might be, was at once attracted to the fair songstresses by their siren-like songs of love and sweet romance and by their epics of the heroic battles of long ago between Bandi¹³ and Balwa on one side and Gringrang and Saljaphang on the other. Great indeed was the treasure and sweet was the pleasure long ago on the fair wooded Hillock of Weram Jambal in heroic Achik song.

—Told by Selsing Shangma Snal
at Jambalgittim, District Garo Hills.

THE HABILITATION OF PEOPLE BY GONGA

It was Gonga who habilitated people to their respective various places of habitation. As weaver and spinner, he put Soera Chanchare in Jakkali Minchongga.¹ For looking after fish and tending rice plants, he placed Takkorima and Kilpamchima in Daram Dasing Rakka Ganda in the land of Gabil.² For weaving striped petticoats for women and for smoking fish, he stationed Mewang and Gaja in Kitchu Jangkri.³ As weavers of red turbans and polishers of white shell beads, he appointed Chinang and Pettang to settle in Nongara.⁴ As bamboo workers and weavers of clothes with lattice work embroideries, he relegated Gale and Rengshe to Dilsing Nalsa Gijang Bra.⁵

*—Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.*

THE CHAMELEON

The real name of the patriarchal head of the Chameleon family was Misi Daijo Saljong Gitajo. He was the first being since the world began, who slept on *borang* (a tree-top house) to keep watch over a slender-stalked millet plant and a smooth-stemmed paddy stalk in his *Jhum* cultivation. His nickname was Ganjapa, which means "the Father of those who would not perform *Gana* ceremony." According to the implied teknonymy, in his case, the father is seen but the son is nowhere.

When once he was in an affluent state, the patriarchal head of the Chameleons, used to put on his brass-elbow rings (*jaksils*) and his red turban and ever boast that he would surely perform a grand *Gana* ceremony at home. He was wonted to boast in the same strain day in and day out; but he would never actually perform the *Gana* ceremony in his life-time. Even afterwards, no one of his descendants ever performed the *Gana* ceremony.

Then at a time the *Chras* (the male relations of his wife) came up in a body to his house, stripped him of his shining *jaksils* (elbow-rings) and his ruddy-coloured puggree and gave him sound slaps on his head. Thenceforth they gave him the appellation of *Ganjapa*. Due to severe slaps received then the heads of the descendants of *Ganjapa* become red at times even now.

—Told by Alasingh Shangma Rongmuthu
at Village Rongmuthugittim, District Garo Hills.

THE OWL AND THE MUNTJAC

Once in olden days two buffaloes bitterly quarrelled with each other over a couple of stalks of newly grown jute in Ahsong Maadi Chiga Rongkuchi.¹ They fought hard and long, butting each other with their sharp long horns, charging and recharging in wild fury, until they came to the habitat of Megam Miktoram Mande Miktosam.² There the people of that place immediately dug out a huge pit in order to entrap the vicious combatants. Eventually one of the wild buffaloes fell into the trap, was immediately killed and its skin and horns carefully preserved to be used respectively in making shields and trumpets. The inhabitants themselves, however, did not know how to prepare the shields and trumpets out of the skin and horns; so they took them to Rawil Racha Rakon Gitel,³ who lived at Saminja Rabongga Adil Sinthingram Bigil Rawilram⁴ in the country of Ahsong Salaram Chiga Mithdeichak.⁵

Rawil Racha took the skin and horns to Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare Nore Chire,⁶ who dwelt in the subterranean region and asked her to teach him to prepare shields and trumpets out of the skin and horns of the slain buffalo. She said to him :

"In preparing shields and trumpets look at the leaves of the *kochoos* (*Colocasia indicum*) that grow in the cellar of my mansion for models. Imitate the star-spangled firmament in decorating them."

Rawil Racha returned to his native village and duly prepared shields (*darils*) and trumpets (*adils*) out of the skin and horns. One of the trumpets thus made was brought for sale at the Dimbilbri Phalwang Ahding⁷ market.

Now, in those days Dohkupa Sahnepa, the patriarchal head of the owls, was much annoyed by the constant physical defects recurring in his own sons. He greatly envied the blackbird and the bhimraj for their good-looking issues with their glossy black feathers, fine symmetrical bodies and moderately sized bills. He openly expressed his admiration for his neighbours' offsprings.

"What prevents thee from producing fine-looking youngsters, too?" asked the blackbird innocently.

The owl did not answer his query directly ; but he promised his neighbours that his next offspring would be exquisitely beautiful.

Now, when the first son of Dohkupa was born he was as ugly as can be imagined. But the patriarchal head of the owls hoped that his next son would be more comely. However the second offspring was just as deformed as the first. But Dohkupa Sahnepa would not admit defeat. He tried again and again ; but his sixth son was no more beautiful than any of his brothers. All six of them were ill-favoured and ugly with reversed triangular heads and unsymmetrical facial contours.

"Like the begetting of the sons of the owl" has ever since become the common current saying among the Achiks when speaking about any invariable result produced again and again contrary to one's expectation and efforts.

In the course of time, when his six sons had grown up to be young, sturdy owls, Dohkupa Sahnepa took them with him to the Dimbilbri Phalwang Ahding market. Each of the six sons carried a basketful of cotton-wool on his back for sale. At the market Dohkupa Sahnepa saw the trumpet (*adil*) made of the buffalo-horn, which was brought there for sale by the people of Mehgam Miktoram Mande Miktosam. He gingerly lifted it up in his hands, scrutinised it closely and animatedly asked the vendor at what price it was being sold. Urengsi Urengbe, the husband of a woman from Chichra Ronggittang in the land of Gabil⁸, stood looking on. He said unconcernedly to the father owl :

"You will do well, my friend, if you buy it with your six baskets of cotton-wool."

Thereupon, Dohkupa Sahnepa exchanged his six baskets of cotton-wool for the single trumpet. He then went about the market place loudly blowing his newly purchased prize. The opstreperous reverberations of his high fanfare were so deafening and disturbing that they stirred up the market people to vigorous protests. They told him to keep quiet. Dohkupa Sahnepa obeyed crestfallenly. He stood still with eyes cast down and fell to thinking what he would next do with his beautiful trumpet. Presently, Salgra came plump upon him and asked him :

"What are you doing standing there in the middle of the market-place ? What are you thinking about ?"

The owl answered naively :

"I am thinking what I shall do next with this trumpet which I have recently exchanged for six baskets of cotton-wool at the instigation of Urengsi Urengbe."

At this Salgra grew peeved and soundly scolded Dohkupa Sahnepa for his foolish bargain. He said :

"Such a price for such a trifle ! Such bargaining is beyond the reach of the poor and the needy. You could have obtained the trumpet for a mere clump of ginger, an old rusty *dao* or a piece of arrow."

The patriarchal owl simply ignored the just reprimand and asked calmly :

"For what purpose should I use the trumpet ?"

Salgra replied :

"When the first rains set in and the winds from the south-west begin to blow, you can sound a reveille with your trumpet to awaken people to their task of digging and hoeing their *jhum* fields for the purpose of sowing cotton seeds in them. Blow thy trumpet hard at that time so that its reverberations may be heard far and wide."

Dohkupa Sahnepa took his trumpet home to his village at Daram Dasing Rakka Ganda.⁹ He and his sons reached there before their fellow-villagers. The latter brought home with them many valuable things for their wives and children as a result of their shrewd bargaining. The patriarchal head of the owls seeing this and realising how he himself had been duped, went to the house of Urengsi Urengbe, who was responsible for his silly bargain, and said to his wife :

"Your husband Urengsi Urengbe is dead. His body is decomposing in the market place. Already the maggots are swarming in it."

Dohkupa Sahnepa then went away. The shame of his foolish bargain still gnawed on his conscience. So, being ashamed to face the jibes of his fellow-villagers, he took his whole family into the forest and there dwelt in caves and hollow trees. However, he continued to blow his trumpet to his heart's content in his abode. The strain : "ilu-lu-luru-ru-ru, redok, redok, kila kokdok, re-re-redok, de-pan-te sakdok, re-re-redok, kila kokdok, redok-redok-re-re-dok,"¹⁰ was the first sounds of trumpet heard since the world began. The descendants of Dohkupa

Sahnepa are now known as owls and their trumpet sounds are their nocturnal hoots.

Ganjingane Chinotokke, the wife of Urengsi Urengbe, killed cows, pigs and fowls and busied herself making the necessary arrangements for the funeral ceremony over her husband. While she was in the thick of preparations, Urengsi Urengbe himself appeared, bringing with him a basketful of sundry articles which he had purchased at the market. He was astonished at the elaborate funeral arrangements and asked excitedly :

"What is the meaning of this ? Why have these animals been killed ? What for is this funeral preparation ?"

Like one distraught, his wife frantically exclaimed :

"By Salgra and Susime ! Dohkupa Sahnepa came and told me that you were dead in the market-place. Implicitly believing him. I have been making all the necessary arrangements for the performance of the funeral rites over your clothes."

Urengsi Urengbe was beside himself with rage and stammered :

"You shouldn't have believed his brazen lies. In making all this nuisance you simply wish me dead. Yes ; you condemn and curse me to death."

Thereupon, the frenzied husband snatched up his clothes and rushed out of sight. During his flight he thought that perhaps his wife would essay to follow him ; so he cut the bridge over the Rongnachil Rongchambil River in such a way that if she should step on it, she would be hurled to the bottom. His conjecture was right ; for his wife immediately pursued him. Hardly had she stepped on the bridge crossing the Rongnachil Rongchambil River when it collapsed under her weight and she was thrown into the water. She died instantly and her corpse was swept away by the swift current. By this time, however, Urengsi Urengbe had reflected on the gravity of his rashness and had retraced his steps to undo the mischief he had done. But he was too late. He found the bridge already broken down and his wife's body already drowned in the surging river. He bewailed his lost mate and made every attempt to recover her body ; but in vain. No matter how diligently he searched for it, he was unable to trace it. So, in despair, he employed Noonggit and Notonggit, two sisters, to assist him in his difficult task. They took their *chekkes* (triangular fishing baskets) and

koksia (fish creels) and scoured the swift river. At length they reclaimed some of her bones from the Rongnachil Rongchambil and brought them to Urengsi Urengbe.

The husband took the bones to Dakgipa Rugipa, the Mother Goddess, and requested her to remould his former wife out of them. Dakgipa Rugipa, in making up the deficiency of bones, had to use some of the bones of a muntjac (barking deer). Gajinggane Chinotokke was remoulded and reincarnated with some parts of muntjac's body. So there was the danger of her turning completely into a muntjac if she ate the same fruit which the muntjacs were accustomed to eat.

Therefore, when Dakgipa Rugipa presented the woman to her husband, Urengsi Urengbe, she warned him saying :

"Now take your wife back home. While you are escorting her there, take care that you do not rest under the shade of either a hog-plum tree or a *bohera* tree (*Terminalia belerica*)."

The husband diligently agreed to follow the thoughtful advice of the goddess. As he proceeded homeward with his newly reincarnated wife, Urengsi Urengbe passed along a hill path leading through many deep forests. The trek was very wearisome ; so, when the day was far advanced, the wife insisted on taking a short rest under a *bohera* tree. In loving compliance to her simple request, the husband totally forgot the behest of the Mother Goddess. The wife sat under the shade of the tree and began to eat some *bohera* fruit which lay scattered there. All of a sudden she grew red, began to walk on fours, and lost her power of speech. She was transformed into a muntjac or barking deer. She bayed out, "hop, hop, hop" and gambolled away into the forest. Her husband was white with rage both at himself and with his wife. He cursed her vehemently saying :

"Let your descendants bay out : "hop, hop, hop," once a month for no reason at all. Let you be startled by the slightest provocation. Let tigers and wolves kill your descendants for prey. Let you bay out when you sense some danger or the presence of tigers and wolves so as to attract their attention. Let you bay out, repeatedly stamping the earth with your hoofs, in premonition of some impending danger or calamity that will befall mankind."

And so, ever since that day muntjacs are accustomed to bay out : "hop, hop, hop, hop,—hop" when they get startled, or when they anticipate some calamity or accident to come upon the people of a particular locality.

—Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

MARANG, THE MANIFESTATION OF EVIL

A woman known as Rere Mehchik Balbul Tira, conceived a child who was later named Marang. The expectant mother one day asked Salgra :

"What is this which I am conceiving? Is it a golden being with bloody eyelids?"

Salgra replied : "Thou art conceiving a rainbow and a *chekchom*, a striped carnivorous jungle spider, combined into one."

The child ultimately born and named Marang Starang. He was nursed by Dohpanggal Maanggal, the patriarchal head of the blackbirds. When he was growing up, he climbed a tall *simul* tree (*Bombax malabaricum*) and a *mandal* tree (*Erythna suberosa*), mingled with the fog and vanished into the ethereal sky. Afterwards Marang Starang assumed seven different forms and manifested himself to the dwellers of the world on seven different occasions.

One day the patriarch of earthworms (Drong Meh-a Sandong Phante Mikkhang Chijim Khahsot Tingring Pongreng Meh-a Pongsheng Phante,³) said to his subjects :

"I am going to the upper regions. Prepare ye the way for me."

He fixed the day on which he would start on his upward journey. However, after a time, he changed his mind, and, without informing his subjects in advance of his change of programme, he set out on his journey before the appointed day. As he was wriggling his way upward, his subjects who were engaged pell-mell in cutting jungles and digging earth did not notice him. So while wildly wielding their implements, they inadvertently inflicted on him a wound out of which blood flowed freely. Marang Starang on this occasion appeared in the form of an amazing pool of blood.

Once there was a great war between Misi Saljong and his subjects on one side and Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare Nore Chire⁴ and her subjects on the other. Many sanguinary engagements took place and much blood was shed. Marang Starang, on this occasion, appeared in the form of gaping wounds, blood

flowing in spate, tumultuous noises of attacks and the uproarious shouts of victory and defeat.

One day Marak Gaora Makal Chendora⁵ was going to a market-place taking with him bow and arrows. On the way Bone Nirepa Jane Nitepa playfully chided him saying :

"What, your bow looks like the crooked back of an animal and your arrows look like the boles of palm trees. You deck yourself in your father-in-law's clothes and roam about".

Marak Gaora retorted ; "The bow is mine ; the dress is mine. Why is this insulting remark made? You will pay for it."

Marak Gaora did not relish the uncalled for joke. He continued his journey chewing his cud of bitterness. On his return from the market Bone Nirepa tried to play the self-same joke on him a second time. Marak Gaora took the unwarranted reference to his father-in-law as an insult. In his fury, he came hurtling on to attack the man whom he considered an impertinent mocker. Bone Nirepa reciprocated his furious attacks. Both were quite equally matched. In a series of duels both were wounded. Their blood ran as freely as water. Marang Starang on this occasion manifested himself in the form of blood and infuriating defeats.

Bone Jahsku Jane Gandophang⁶ one day had a wrestling match with Matbilrang Sinchirang Wasipa Wakongpa,⁷ the patriarch of the bears. Matbilrang Sinchirang was duly forewarned to keep his niece Simchire Balmatchi at a safe distance during the contest. Having moved away from the starting place in the fury of their wrestling and in the heat of physical strain, they planted their feet unawares on her stomach and she died instantaneously in a pool of her own blood. Marang Starang on this occasion appeared in the form of bloodshed and infuriated strife.

Marak Ganggitchak Jahpat Botirak⁸ used to carry a venomous sting in his body. One day he lay concealed in an earthen rice bin of Konsnara Kondambe, stung him and bolted away. Exasperated by the pain, Konsnara Kondambe chased the assailant far and wide. The fugitive took refuge in the earthen dam of Bamon Racha Sojon Gitel.¹⁰ The relentless pursuer caught him there and hacked him into pieces. Marang

Starang on this occasion manifested himself in the form of bloodshed and death.

A son of Mande and a son of Mehgam were once very good friends. One day the son of Mande was taking his meal on a raised open porch with his children by his side, voraciously chewing soft ears of wild banana trees and succulent shoots of wild cane cooked as curry. At the moment the son of Mehgam came to him in search of his castrated pig which he had lost a few days before. He mistook the ears of wild plantain trees and cane shoots for pork and straightway accused the son of Mande of having eaten up his castrated pig. The accused refuted the charge. They quarrelled bitterly, and, amidst loud screams of hate and bitterness, they fought hard against each other. Both were terribly wounded. Their blood flowed like a stream. Marang Starang on this occasion manifested himself in the form of depraved hatred and bloodshed.

Ever since Marang Starang has been manifesting himself among mankind ever and anon in the form of murderous hostilities, wasteful bloodshed, and bitter strifes. Certain things, words and acts become ill-omened because of their association with the situations of his manifestation.

—Told by Totim Shangma Nengminja
at Rongjeng, District Garo Hills.

ORIGIN OF WEEK DAYS

Among the Achicks in the land of Nongchram¹ in the olden days there lived a man named Amin Jamsin. He once had a *jhum* field alongside of a deep pool known as Dekbik Wari.² The pool was adjacent to an important thoroughfare which led to the chief marketplaces of the country. A water-wight known as Sarenchi Bugarik dwelt in this pool.

Now, as human beings tramped to and from the market-places, Sarenchi Bugarik was wont to count the days, allotting a name to each day in a week. Amin Jamsin heard the water-wight uttering these names and he adopted them to signify the days of the week.

The names of these week days,³ originally used by Sarenchi Bugarik, were as follows :

1. Grisho
2. Abesho
3. Airo
4. Mechobal
5. Naringsho
6. Sanicho
7. Chigicho

In the course of time these names came to be accepted and recognized among the Achiks as the standard names of the week days.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF THE MONTHS AND THE SEASONS

An ancient patriarch among the Achiks, known as Bonepa Janepa, first cleared the jungle on the hill of Misi Kokdok in the land of Shokhadam¹ for the purpose of *jhum* cultivation. His was the first *jhum* cultivation in Achik Ahsong.

This patriarch strictly observed and performed all the rites connected with *jhum* cultivating as ordained by Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa to Ahni Apilpa Chini Galapa, another patriarch who was the first among the Achiks to obtain rice.

Bonepa Janepa, as the first *jhum* cultivator in the hills of Achik Ahsong, invented the names of the months² as follows :—

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Galmakja | 7. Mejaphang |
| 2. Mebakja | 8. Ahnija |
| 3. Jagro | 9. Berokja |
| 4. Sohgalja | 10. Khilokja |
| 5. Jagapja | 11. Awitja |
| 6. Jamebok | 12. Wachengja |

The Achik forefathers universally accepted these names of the months, which, in the fitness of things, connote their periodical *jhuming* activities all the year round.

Bonepa Janepa also used the following names of the seasons³ of the year which also gained uniform recognition among the Achik forefathers :—

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. Sinkari | 4. Dingkari |
| 2. Bandoni | 5. Wachi |
| 3. Phalynkari | 6. Ahrak |

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

INEQUALITY IN WEALTH

In the ages long gone by, there was perfect equality in human society. Wealth, riches and class-feeling among peoples were then unknown. Everybody lived in happiness and simplicity. During these halcyon days of yore, people ate, drank and made merry in their own innocent ways. They married and pursued their respective avocations without one interfering with another.

With the passing of ages, however, these conditions changed. It was Inda Racha Gangga Nokma¹ and Ahning Drong Racha Chining Indong Nokma,² the inhabitants of the regions under the water, who first realized the advantages of gathering together the good things of this world. They, therefore, avariciously amassed vast wealth and riches and became, consequently, the first aristocrats since the world began. Sahnepa Munepa, who was the first human settler and cultivator of land in the world, followed suit. As a man of immense possessions, he openly appeared in all his pageantry, pomp and glory.

Following the example of these trio, Ganchengpa Duchengpa³ (the advisor to Noro⁴ and Mande,⁵) became an aristocrat. He accumulated immense quantities of rice, millet and other esculent grains and thrived exceedingly well. He invited a large concourse of people to his house and performed, for the first time, the *Gana* ceremony in which he gave sumptuous feasts to all the people. In front of the assembled guests, he danced round and round merrily with *milam* (two-edged sword) and *danil* (shield) in his hands, making dexterous shuffles with his feet on the floor. This *Gana* ceremony was an emblem of his aristocratic standing among his compatriots of that age.

Sahnepa Munepa first taught mankind the art of accumulating wealth and riches from the resources of land and sea. He cultivated cotton and other crops in his fields and persuaded his compatriots to do the same. He prevailed upon people to hold a market at Samegaru⁶ by the mouth of the Chekjong river. This was the first market since the world began. Gods of the upper regions and lower areas freely mingled with the people and patronized the market at Samegaru. Among

them Gonga Ahning Dohgisim,⁷ Misi Saljong,⁸ Susime Singepa,⁹ Salgra Daangpa¹⁰ and Kamal Aepa Ajepa¹¹ were the most prominent gods who associated with human beings in this market.

To the newly-founded market Gonga Ahning Dohgisim brought from the subterranean region valuable gongs, beads, seven basketsful of precious necklaces, a red cow, a white pig, a black goat and seven huge cages of brown fowls. He showed them all to Sahnepa Munepa who immediately purchased the pig and fowls for rearing. A man named Bamin Racha Sojon Gitel bought the cow and the goat.

Another market was held after a time at Dimbil bri Phalwang Ahding. The motley crowd of men and gods who participated in this market consisted of Grim Racha Sangsil Nokma,¹² Aminpa Ajalpa,¹³ Rengkopa Minsepa,¹⁴ Mesenchi Soksonchi,¹⁵ Niba Jonja,¹⁶ Solbirakke,¹⁷ Korongmeha Kochong Phante,¹⁸ and Gingsi Olchok Jahpat Chongshi.¹⁹ Afterwards, markets sprang up at Adil Bri Tekkha Ahkhang²⁰ and Songkha-dik Wakmethom.

Previously all mankind were equally rich. They had in equal proportion a sufficiency of all the necessities of life. Wealth and riches were not confined to a limited few. But the conditions were changing, and it was feared that with the concentration of wealth in the hands of all men, the mutual regard between man and man would vanish and even the gods might not receive their due homage.

Lest men should become enamoured of wealth, Susime Singepa and Salgra Daangpa entreated Gonga Ahning Dohgisim, the god of wealth, to go back into the subterranean region, taking with him Ruram Sureng, the mother of fowls, Rokkime, the mother of rice, and Nahma Nahsa, the mother of fishes. The god of wealth accordingly retreated from the world by way of the Gonga River,²¹ taking with him the aforementioned benign personages, the chief props of human life and happiness in this terrestrial world.

Gonga Ahning Dohgisim left with Thengthe Bandok Mikphil Jahpil,²² the imperial ruler of the elves and fairies, who had the power to bestow upon men the worldly riches according to their individual needs. But he did not exercise the even-handed justice that was expected of him. He

concealed the mother of fowls in the bowels of the earth and sent the mother of fishes into the depths of the sea. He locked up all wealth and riches inside imperishable rocks; and declined to reveal to mankind where rich mines of gold, precious metals and jewels, and valuable gongs were to be found. He bestowed wealth and riches only upon his favourite few. Ever since that time, some were blessed with immense wealth and possessions, while others were rendered poor and needy. This was the reason why all men did not grow rich to the same degree.

The gods Misi Ajepa²³ and Saljong Munepa²⁴ offered fowls, eggs and packets of cotton as a propitiatory sacrifice to the god of wealth in behalf of Minima Rokkime, the mother of rice, and Nahma Nahsa, the mother of fishes. The two were then recalled into the world. Minima Rokkime since has been dwelling in Suakram Pakphilram; and Nahma Nahsa, in the water depths.

So, through the intercession of Misi Ajepa and Saljong Munepa, rice and fish, as well as the locked up wealth and riches concealed in hard rocks, have been made accessible to human beings. However, Thengthe Bandok Mikphil Jahphil or Kubera,²⁵ the close-fisted and miserly god of the subterranean region, is yet keeping close watch over the hoarded treasures of his underground domain.

—Told by Jingna Marak Raksam
at Village Rongbinggiri, District Garo Hills.

ORIGIN OF THE GARO PHRATRIES

Long, long ago a man named Behera had come to settle in a certain country, known as Sirit, in modern Asiatic Russia. There two mighty sons, known as Japan and Achik, were born to him. His wife was called Ehera. She was an extraordinarily strong and exceptionally virtuous woman.

Achik, the great younger brother of Japan, was accustomed to sleep at night, standing on his legs. His people asked him as to why he used to sleep standing. Achik replied :

"My elder brother has gone towards the East, following the guide of Saka Misi Saljong, the Life-Giving Sun-God. I remain here to build up a kingdom. I desire to keep my head ever alert and free from dirt or dust of the ground. Build me a house with raised platform or floor."

A *shang* house was built for him by his followers. Achik used to dwell on the *shang* house with his family and revered mother, who was accounted as the real owner of the *shang* house. Thus Achik was the first man in the world to erect a house with raised floor. Because the revered mother of Achik was first wont to dwell in a *shang* house, she was first known as *Shangma*, that is, the mother of one who used to dwell in a *shang* house. Afterwards Achik was generally known as Achik Shangma.

In course of time, it once happened that during the titanic struggle between the children of Misi Saljong and the children of Ahning Chining, there was a great drought all over the world. The existence of mankind was in jeopardy due to lack of drinking water. To quench their painful thirst some people actually drank deer's urine in those days.

At that time, the mother of Achik Shangma, while young, strong and beautiful, was accustomed to go to Misi Saljong's dwelling place to fetch water for her children. She was so beautiful that Misi Saljong himself on one occasion committed adultery with her which resulted in her becoming pregnant. There was no one upon whom Misi Saljong could place the blame of this shameful deed ; and, as he feared disgrace and shame which accompanied it, he earnestly implored the mother of Achik Shangma to help him out of his dilemma, saying :

"Tell your people that, on account of your having drunk deer's urine for want of water, you are conceiving a Shangma Khudambokbok."²

The Mother of *Shangma* heeded the advice of her celestial paramour. Therefore, the members of the Shangma matrilineal phratry are commonly said to be the descendants of the stag; although in actual fact, they are the progeny of Saka Misi Saljong, the Celestial Sun-God, and belong to the Solar race.

One of the descendants of Achik Shangma was called Bohol. Bohol was overwhelmed with passionate love for the daughter of his mother's younger sister. At last Bohol openly wanted to marry her and went on wooing her for seven years. But the chaste younger matrilineal sister did not yield. She would never dream of committing the sin of incest, which was the most abominable sin among her people. Because of her firmness of will, she was given the name of Marak, which means the mother who is firm and rigidly chaste. (*Ma* means mother, and *ra* means firm or strong).

Long afterwards, the descendants of Marak formed themselves into a distinct phratry the members of which could be married to the members of the Shangma phratry. The members of the Shangma and Marak matrilineal phratrys alone formed a distinct Achik tribe, the component units of which are generally known as *Shangmama Ranjama* and *Marakma Makalma*.

The descendants of Achik afterwards settled in Mojib Valley. There was born among them a mighty warrior known as Kimpol. In course of time, they moved thence and settled in Jin Hills. Another mighty warrior, named Waib, was born among them while they settled there. After many years, they came and settled in the Chemang Hills in Ahsong Tibotgiri, the modern Tibet. While they were settling there, a renowned warrior, known by the name of Bangkaulah, and the two famous matriarchs, respectively called Nosime and Balsime, were born among them.

In course of time a large batch of the Achik race left their settlements in Ahsong Tibotgiri, as the land became drier and drier and the soil thereof became deteriorated, and came down and settled in Ahsong Nengabad Chiga Nengchibad, whence they afterwards removed to Ahsong Saora Chiga Timbora. In course

of time, they left the place and settled in Rongmikseram Tangka Datram and in Ahsong Benagong Chiga Budalong.

While they settled there, a beautiful Achik princess, named Meje Rani, daughter of Hirasingsh, married one mighty warrior, named Rappa Radopa. Meje Rani belonged to the *Gabil* clan, which was originally of *Shangma* matriphratry. Meje Rani's daughters were known as Aje, Gilje, Dawe and Changshe.

Rongmikseram Tangka Datram and Asong Benagong Chiga Budalong then comprised the whole southern bank of the Brahmaputra in modern Goalpara and Kamrup Districts in modern Assam, India. During Mir Jumla's invasion into this area in 1661 A.D. both Aje and Gilje, the daughters of Meje Rani, married Mahommedan officers from Bihar, who bore the surname *Momin*.

As the Muslim husbands of Aje and Gilje belonged to the *Momin* community of Bihar, the progenies of Aje and Gilje for the first time among the Achik race took up the surname of *Momin*. This was how *Momin* became the clannish surname of the descendants, of Aje and Gilje. (*Momin*, in Arabic language, means *Mussalman*.) Ever since, *Momin*, as a separate matriphratry, came to exist among the Achik race.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

THE FIRST JHUM CULTIVATION

The first man to settle down in the hills of Achik Ahsong and carry on *jhum* cultivation was Bone Nirepa Jane Nitepa.¹ It was Atakmeh-a Jongthakphante² who first taught him to lop off branches and to fell trees for his *jhum* cultivation. At first he and Misipa Nahrasanta Arajengja together cleared the primeval forest on the hills of Sokhadam,³ felling innumerable gigantic trees and lopping off enormous branches of others. This Misipa was the same god who afterwards cleared jungle on the hill of Ranggira. However, the clearing of Bone Nirepa was the first opening of jungle for *jhum* cultivation.

Now, during those first days of jungle clearing there was a continual drought for seven successive years and famine raged in all parts of the world. At that time there was no way for Bone Nirepa's learning the alternating course of the seasons of the year. So, in the absence of any knowledge of the recurring seasons, he and his companion continued to bare the jungles and cut down trees all over the hill of Sokhadam.

At the end of the seven years, one of the servants of Misi Saljong, named Nambok Meh-a Namshangphante Raropatehtopa Galapa Rakrepa,⁴ sent Choeokthongsi Choejahbangshi, Dohkong-sibinepa and Dohnatikpinsepa to Ahning Bokjari Chining Dimjari Nore Chire, the goddess of Rain, to inquire of her the time of her visit to the earth. They reached her abode just at the time when she was bustling about making preparations for her journey to the terrestrial region.

The good goddess of Rain welcomed the couriers warmly and told them freely of her ensuring visit to the earth. She also taught them to read the signs in the universe of her approaching visits to the earth in the future. They then returned to Nambok Meh-a and said to him :

"Let the *jhum* clearings be set afire. The rains and winds are drawing near."

The descendants of these messengers have ever since remained as the forerunners of the first rains. Choeokthongsi was the patriarchal head of the magpies, and Dohnatikpinsepa, the patriarchal head of the small crimson-breasted barbets.

Nambok Meh-a Namsangphan̄e now sent a message to Misi Saljong telling him to inform Bone Nirepa of the approaching visit of the goddess of Rain to the earth. This was done and the first *jhum* cultivator was advised to burn up his *jhum* clearing. It was Nambok-Meh-a Namsangphante himself who brought the news to Bone Nirepa. He further urged him to send for Srethonggitchak Gitokwahrikkat,⁵ the Fire-god, to help him in his task.

Now Nambok-Meh-a had never before seen Srethonggitchak. So, in order to get a good view of him as he was coming to clear up the *jhum* fields of Bone Nirepa, the servant of Misi Saljong climbed up a denuded tree which stood in the clearing and watched the Fire-god approach. He admired Srethonggitchak's ability very much, especially as he beheld the flames pirouetting on undeterred across the clearing towards him. Soon Nambok Meh-a found himself enveloped in the arms of Srethonggitchak and was burnt alive. The spirit of Nambok Meh-a was reincarnated as a chameleon.

After this mishap Salgra sent Dohkhangkare Dohsurae to set bounds to Bone Nirepa's *jhum* clearing by cutting it into lines with his saliva in order that Misi Saljong might be appeased over the death of his servant. Dohkhangkare accordingly picked up the charred bones of Nambok Meh-a and set them up in lines as pegs to determine the boundaries of the first *jhum* field. Out of these bony pegs there grew forth *mendu* or *landu* plants (*Cystisus cajan*) which remain in existence up to this very day.

At the time of the *jhum* harvest, Bone Nirepa reaped six baskets of millet and six baskets of paddy from the environs of a cluster of massive rocks alone, which is now known as Misikokdok.

Now, when Bone Nirepa was settling on the hill of Sokhadam, carrying on his *jhum* cultivation, he took to wives the daughter of the Earth-spirit and the niece of Banggriajimpa, the Earthquake god. This god was incensed with the Earth-spirit for disdaining him in getting herself married to his niece's husband. So he said to Bone Nirepa :

"I will jerk the earth out of her wits now and then for insulting my niece and for her utter disregard of me ; but, I will not touch her life while doing so. I will also bring Suuri Wakma Sinchikchikma Khoripokma,⁶ the goddess of Snow, to fall

upon her to punish her. Whenever I do so, protect thyself by a sacrifice of egg-breaking and shattering of pestles on earth. I shall then pass over thy habitat in peace.

Whenever Banggriajimpa shook the earth or brought the Snow-goddess on her as a punishment for her encroachment on his niece's matrimonial rights, Bone Nirepa performed a sacrifice of egg-breaking and pestle-shattering. Then no shocks were felt and no biting cold visited him at his habitat in Denggadare Silkhongkhante Wahrangkhokhang Garapetchok.⁷ The Achiks believe that no earthquake shocks are ever felt and no benumbing cold ever experienced in this particular area of Achik Ahsong up to this very day.

—Told by Sonaram R. Sangma
at Village Salpara, District Goalpara.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF ACHIK FOLK DANCES

The Folk Dances of the Achiks are of various kinds, such as various forms of martial dances such as performed in the *Gana* ceremonial performances and *Ahsong Khosi Tata* and *Denbilsia* sacrificial performances, in the *Mangona* or *Saram* (post-funeral ceremonial performances) and in the *Wangala* (Post-harvest ceremonial performances). Dances are also performed in certain sacrificial ceremonies and rites, such as *Aemarong Krita*, *Dakgipa Amua*, *Songading Krita*, *Nokdonggaa*, *Nokphante Nokdonggaa*, etc.

Tomtoms of different sizes and shapes, which emit several varieties of intonations, known as *Damas*, *Krams*, *Nakaras*, *Krambichoks*, and valuable gongs, bearing different names, bamboo flutes, brass cymbals, known as *Kakwas*, trumpets, known as *Adils* (prepared from buffalo-horns) and *Singgas* (a buffalo-horn with bamboo-tubes stuck into them) are all used as musical instruments during all these performances.

The following are the names of Achik Folk Dances, most commonly practised during the *Wangala* in Achik Ahsong, with their English equivalents in meanings and their real underlying meanings :

(A) Achik names of Folk Dances	(B) English Equivalents	(C) Underlying Meanings
1. <i>Grong Doka</i>	Starting drums	Life is a dance, let us dance together.
2. <i>Gaewang Roa</i>	Girls' dance	The spirit of youth delights in activity.
3. <i>Dohme Gonga</i>	Lowering cocks' tails	Sometimes we stoop to conquer.
4. <i>Sipai Awit Roa</i>	Sepoy drum play	Besides fighting, the warriors dance : Life is not all battle.
5. <i>Mehmang Mi Su'a</i>	Ghosts pounding rice	Invisible helpers are around us.
6. <i>Nomil Khambe Toa</i>	Girls measuring height	Life has its aspirations
7. <i>Dama Jonga</i>	Drum shuffling	Life must have its diversions.

(A) Achik names of Folk Dances	(B) English Equivalents	(C) Underlying Meanings
8. <i>Dama Barat Sala</i>	Tightening drum strings	Remain prepared always : Be strong.
9. <i>Onggal Rua</i>	Hearth-rake demolition	We take delight in destruction, obstruction and construction.
10. <i>Matma Siako Sogin Cha'a</i>	Vultures feed on a buffalo's carcass	Humanity feeds on its dead past.
11. <i>Salam Ka'a</i>	Greeting	Recognise sanctity of life.
12. <i>Gah-e Roa</i>	Kneeling	There is divinity in humility.
13. <i>Nomil Nipila</i>	Girls looking behind	Life is a venture and memories of the past make us reflect.
14. <i>Jik Seka</i>	Eloping with a lady-love	The way of true love is not smooth. However, true love has its way of overcoming obstacles.
15. <i>Ba'ra Su'a</i>	Cloth washing	Purify your desires and ennoble your actions.
16. <i>Chame Changa</i>	Pursuit of lady-love	Constancy in love brings music to one's soul.
17. <i>Chame Mik-kang Nia</i>	Lady-love's glances	There is a sweet song in love's looks.
18. <i>Budu Rateta</i>	Cutting a rope asunder	Life has its difficulties to surmount and hurdles to overcome.
19. <i>Chawari Sika</i>	Capturing a bridegroom	There is compelling power in the creative urge of life.
20. <i>Ba'ra Wa'gong Rama</i>	Sunning cloth on bamboo poles.	Good and kind deeds cannot be hidden. Noble actions are never in vain.

(A) Achik names of Folk Dances	(B) English Equivalents	(C) Underlying Meanings
21. <i>Ambretong Khola</i>	Picking up hog-plums	Gather the treasures of life while you may.
22. <i>Chambil Den'a</i>	Pummelo cutting	Life's sorrows should be scattered with life's music.
23. <i>Chu Khana</i>	Wine offering	Stimulate others with the joy of living.
24. <i>Mapil Roa</i>	Bear play	Life has its gruffness; its ups and downs.
25. <i>Jik Sekako Rim'a</i>	Bringing back eloped wife.	Love has its correction and chastisements.
26. <i>Dohkru Sua</i>	Pecking of the wild doves	Even the apparently harmless beings, as the wild doves, resist anything that impedes their acquisition of a good and also anything that is noxious.
27. <i>Durea Rata</i>	Cutting down corn-stalks to gather corn-cobs	Preserve the vital things of life while there is time.
28. <i>Oping Rata</i>	Slashing off head-gear	Great souls, like great mountains, always attract storms.
29. <i>Ajema Roa</i>	Ajema walks about	Successive motion, like the walking about of Ajema, consists in a flux.
30. <i>Ambretong Rua</i>	Shaking off the Hog-Plum Fruits	Life's cares and anxieties are dissipated through a certain supreme shock or a great event.

(A) Achik names of Folk Dances	(B) English Equivalents	(C) Underlying Meanings
31. <i>Matmana</i> <i>Jeng On'a</i>	Feeding fodder to a buffalo	A cognoscitive being, such as the buffalo, has an elicited appetite, which has to be satisfied with a purpose.
32. <i>Dama</i> <i>Jajoka</i>	Realteration of drums	Love is not measured only by the joys and pleasures which it gives, but by the ability to draw joy out of sorrow and bitterness.
33. <i>Rome'amaa</i>	Girls playing elderly women	Even when, with a sense of humour and a happy hopeful outlook, one plays maturity and greatness, one finds one's own littleness and immaturity in the complex problems of life.
34. <i>Nomil</i> <i>Donua</i>	Concealing of girls' own comeliness	No man ever sees enough of beauty or learns enough of truth to satisfy him in this world.
35. <i>Nomil</i> <i>Jajoka</i>	Girls undergoing imperceptible radical changes	Some joys in life do not provoke even smiles just as some griefs never create a tear.

(A) Achik names of Folk Dances	(B) English Equivalents	(C) Underlying Meanings
36. <i>Nomil Ba'ra Donua</i>	Girls hiding cloths	Truth has intricate intertwinings but our will is the only thing that is our own.
37. <i>Khil Oka</i>	Picking up of cotton-wool out of bolls	Take life as it is without its sugar-coating and never wincing because of life's bitterness.
38. <i>Nomil An'-tangni Mi-pal ko On'a</i>	Lady-love giving away her own share of cooked-rice	Sacrifice alone nourishes true love. Without sacrifice love turns out to be trite, banal and commonplace.
39. <i>Chambil Goa</i>	Shooting off a shaddock fruit	So long as one is in the wrong place he cannot grow.
40. <i>Nomil Dohme Suala</i>	Girls distribute cocks' tail plumes	In the heroic age, women claim equity and give to the world which no man can give.
41. <i>Nomil Kas-rang Donue Ringa</i>	Girls smoke smoking-pipes in secret	Secret sweet feminine principles should not be probed into.
42. <i>Nomil Phante Salitinga</i>	Girls and young men drawing up together in line	The greatest joys of life are the joys of love and of lovers getting together.
43. <i>Dohsik Megaru Ch'a</i>	Parrots feed on Job's tears (<i>coix Lach-ryma Jobi</i>)	Unforeseen problems, intricate and profound, often present themselves and seek solution through the toil

(A) Achik names of Folk Dances	(B) English Equivalents	(C) Underlying Meanings
44. <i>Chambil Mesaa</i>	Dance of the Pomelo Fruit	and blood of human beings. Life, with its elements of passion, is an immanent activity.
45. <i>Makka Abong Cha'a</i>	Monkeys Feed on Maize	The irresponsibilities of the mediocre bring about life's greatest tragedies but the world allows only the mediocre to live.
46. <i>Khil Pua</i>	Sowing of cotton-seeds	Only when we become little, do we ever become great, and, we find the infinite only on reducing ourselves to zero.
47. <i>Chame Chakoree Kattimanga</i>	Love's going astray through excessive anxiety.	There are times when life seems to have been losing its tang, its warmth and its joy.
48. <i>Nomil Jajong Nidoa</i>	Girls looking up to the Moon	Do not live on futile and empty dreams.

These forms of Achik folk dances are used to be performed, as exercise and amusement, by elderly men and women, by young men and girls together during the festivities of the *Wan-gala* (Post-Harvest Thanksgiving Ceremony) in the Achik villages in Achik Ahsong.

Collected by the Author personally at Villages Rengsangiri, Selbalgiri, Theb-ronggiri (Waramgiri) and Rombagiri, Mauza No. III, District Garo Hills, Assam.

THE JACKALS

Waenggil Wachenggil, the patriarchal head of the jackals, was formerly a domestic dog belonging to the god, Misi Saljong. He lived with his family in luxurious comfort and perfect happiness in the splendid celestial mansions of Misi Saljong. The celestial dogs had plenty of food and drink which was given to them daily by their thoughtful master. They experienced no frigid winter or scorching summer; neither were they ever drenched by rain or benumbed by the biting cold of snow. All troubles, illnesses, anxieties, pains and sorrows were unknown to them. Their minds were never harassed by any earthly care whatever. Their joy was unalloyed and their delight unbounded in that abode of everlasting happiness where their good master dwelt.

Kakpa Manggism Dohkapa Sakgisim,¹ the patriarchal head of the ravens and crows, seeing Waenggil Wachenggil living in perfect peace and security and having at all times plenty of food to eat, became extremely jealous of the dog's good fortune and sought means of seducing him to the terrestrial region.

With indomitable courage and resolute determination Kakpa Manggisim one day flew up to the ethereal mansions of Misi Saljong and tempted Waenggil Wachenggil, addressing him as follows :

"Fie, you have been living here all your life without knowing what real freedom is. It is true that you get plenty of food to eat from your master every day. Still, that food is not what you yourself would choose, had you the opportunity of eating according to your own choice. You must partake solely of what your master places before you; nothing more. Again, you must remain forever in the same place day after day, having of yourself no freedom of movement or action. Don't you know that life without activity is as good as death?

"You are no better off than a fettered slave. Yet, however contented as a slave you may be, you will never know the sweet charm and ecstasy of unrestrained freedom. Freedom is our birthright. All living beings want freedom. They desire to be free to go where they wish to go; free to eat what they choose to eat; and free to do what they like to do. Even

inanimate objects, such as wind, rain, and water love freedom. The rains fall as they like; the winds blow how they choose; and the waters flow where they wish. Everything struggles, whines and chafes, if its freedom is imperiled.

"I am free, as you see. It is because of my freedom that I can come up here to you. I go where I wish; I eat what I like; I do what I please. Whereas you would never dream of such freedom here.

"Yes, I see that you live here in splendid mansions encompassed by your master's magnificent luxuries; but to a being in your condition, who is no better off than a slave, splendour dazzles in vain, and magnificence glows only to weary. How monotonous it is to stay in a gilded palace without freedom of activity! Even should I walk in streets of glimmering gold and sleep in beds of ivory bejewelled with the rarest and most priceless gems in the world, I should derive no pleasure from these baubles, and should find life hardly worth living, if, at the same time, I should be deprived of freedom of movement, thought and action. By nature, any one cannot be happy unless he is free. Personally, I would rather dwell in a squalid cottage having my freedom, than rot in a splendid palace where freedom is a stranger. It is liberty that counts in this life. It is freedom which enables us to enjoy and express ourselves to the fullest extent.

"Down on the earth we live free, happy lives of our own amidst great tall trees, luxuriant green herbs and plants, which grow promiscuously beside majestic rivers, sparkling rills, murmuring brooks and winsome waterfalls. The earth produces all sorts of enticing food. We have but to choose and eat. Wherever we go, we find food and beautiful places. Our hearts thrill with rapture at the sight of mountains, hills, rivers, woodlands and valleys. Truly is my terrestrial region, the land of my birth, far more beautiful, far more pleasant, fuller and happier than your celestial sphere where you never enjoy unmitigated freedom."

The patriarchal head of the jackals was much impressed by the enthralling speech of Kakpa Manggisim. He decided to switch abodes. So, taking his family with him, he stealthily left his master and followed the patriarchal head of the ravens and crows down to the terrestrial region. As soon as they arrived on

the earth Kakpa Manggisim said blandly to the newcomer :
"This is the earth of which I spoke to you. Now live and learn."
So saying, he flew away suddenly leaving them to shift for themselves as best as they could.

The jackals soon discovered that life on earth is not at all easy. They experienced the manifold trouble and inconvenience of inclement weather and the ever-alternating round of seasons with their sunshine, rain, sleet and snow. Their movement was hampered by the presence of different kinds of deadly enemies. They found that life feeds on life. So they became carnivorous.

Ever since that mournful day, having yet hard lives to lead, the gregarious jackals are at times accustomed to look up vacantly at the beautiful sky and wail bitterly :

"O what humbug ! O what a difference ! We are undone here ! O what a place of hardships, miseries, tears, and sorrow ! O what hunger and cold ! Take us back, O our master, our celestial God. O take us back !"

—Told by Monggolsing Momin Gabil
at Borbaka (Mandacuttah), District Kamrup.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN ACHIKLAND

Below are given the names of some places in Achik Asong. What is now known artificially as the Garo Hills is nothing but a fragment of the real Achik Ahsong of about three centuries back. As a result of division of the real Achik Ahsong by the British on the principle of "Divide and Rule," large slices of the Achik Ahsong had been arbitrarily merged in the neighbouring districts of Assam and Bengal adjoining the Garo Hills. These places, the names of which are given below, are, in a large measure, connected with the folklore stories and legends of the Achiks, which have not been as yet fully brought to light. Apart from their connection with Achik lore and legend, every ardent admirer and lover of natural beauty and grandeur finds them worth visiting.

BALPHAKRAM HILL

This hill is on the south-eastern portion of the modern Garo Hills District. It forms the basin of the Mahadeo Stream. To fully appreciate the beauty of the Balphakram Hill, one has to go up and down and explore every possible spot on it. One finds here on the top of the hill various herbs of medicinal value, which are visible only during monsoon rains. Spring is the best season to visit this hill. The excursion thereon is thoroughly enjoyable and is worth making.

On the top of the Balphakram Hill, by the edge of its main precipice overlooking the south, one can look down on an awfully deep abyss and enjoy distant views on the south. This huge hollow place here is believed by the Achiks to have been once the real site of the Chitmang Hill, which is at a little distance north-west of it. It is believed by them that Goera's grandmother once removed the Chitmang Hill from this place. It is also believed by the Achiks that Balphakram Hill and the areas round about it formed one compact *Akhingland* of the Rongbang mahari (clan).

On the top of the Balphakram Hill one finds also what are known to the Achiks as *Mebit Mebang*, *Natapani Bagan*¹ (i.e., the Garden of Natapa, the king of Death), *Matchruni Nikgil*

(i.e. the Market of Matchru), *Mehmang Misal Chakram*, *Boldak Matchu Karam*, *Chianggal Chidimak* and *Mehmang Songgitcham* (i.e., the deserted village of the ghosts), which are all connected with the Achik lore and legends.

THE CHITMANG TOP

The Atongs, a division of the Achiks, call Chitmang Hill : *Waemong* (i.e., the chief goddess). It is in the south-eastern part of the modern Garo Hills. One has to climb to the top of this Chitmang Hill in order to feast his eyes on the beautiful landscape, extending far down, especially to the south and south-west of it, as far as eyes can reach, and to find out various rare wild flowers and herbs, growing there in abundance. April or May or immediately after the rains is the best time to visit the top of this Hill.

This hill is believed by the Achiks to be the favourite resort of Shib-Thakur or Mahadev and his consort Parvati. It is also believed by the Animistic Achiks that the spirits of the dead first reach the top of this hill before their final departure to the spiritland, in the Great Beyond there to sojourn for a period of time until they are reborn into this world. The "country of Chitmang" and the "Watering-place of Balmang" (a neighbouring place) are always mentioned in the funeral wails and songs of mourning for the dead among the Achiks.

THE RANGRAM PATAL

The Rangram Patal or the Rock of Rangram is on the Simsang River at Jangkre on the border of Khasia and Garo Hills. It is one solid mass of rock of immense bulk. It is believed by the Achiks that a mighty malignant god, named Rangram, lives within the Rangram Patal. Sacrificial offerings of goats, pigs and fowls are made on a particular site of this rock known as *Rangram Kritram*, by the Achik inhabitants of the locality. On the Khasia Hills side of this rock, there is a curative medicinal spring, which is jealously kept secret by the local people. A little after the first rains, medicinal mineral substance issues along with the spring of water and, particularly at this time it is believed that it has the most potential power to cure all sorts of skin diseases.

The Rangram Patal is an ideal place for picnic or angling. The best time to visit this rock is either before or after the rainy season, when the water of the river is clear.

THE KHANCHRU WARI

The Khanchru Wari or the Pool of the Earthworm² is immediately above the Rangram Patal.

It is believed by the Achiks to be the deepest pool in the Simsang River in the Garo Hills and to be the headquarters of all the aquatic living beings in the river. Aquatic serpents of immense sizes, known as *Sangknie*s, are said to have made this pool their chief permanent abode.

When the water is clear, this pool and the jagged rocks on its banks really look grand. It is an excellent pool for angling. The best time to visit this pool is either before or after the rains.

THE MRIG WARI

The Mrig Wari or the Pool of Mrig is in the Simsang River at Rongbingiri.³ It is believed by the Achiks to be the second deepest pool in the Simsang River in Garo Hills. The rocks on both sides of the pool, though rough-shaped, are smooth-surfaced and provide excellent seats to laze in. It is an ideal place for picnic and angling. To fully appreciate it, both sides of the pool have to be visited. The best time to visit it is before or after the rains.

This Mrig Wari is stated to be the *Chigat* or Watering-place of Nokma⁴ Abong Chirepa, the last independent Highland Paramount Chieftain in the Hills, who had his headquarters⁵ on the northern spur overlooking this pool on the left bank of it. Nokma Abong Chirepa was an aristocratic ruler of all the Achiks in the Hills, in about 1150 A. D. On a massive solid rock on the right bank of this pool there are two holes or cavities, known as *Chasamkols*, or cavities serving as paddy-pounding mortars. It is stated by the old and very aged Achiks that here Nokma Abong Chirepa's servants used to pound rice and millet in days gone by.

MISI KOKDOK ROCKS

The Misi Kokdok Rocks form a cluster of massive rocks on the Shohkadam Hill⁵ in the central region of the Garo Hills.

Misi Kokdok means "Six Basketfuls of Millet." An ancient patriarch of men, known as *Bonepa Janepa*, the first *jhum* cultivator (as reputed to be in the folk legends), was said to have accumulated six basketfuls of millet and six basketfuls of paddy from the bases around this cluster of rocks. Sacrificial offerings are made by the Achik villagers here at two separate spots at the foot of the rocks for rain and sunshine.

THE MONGRE HILL

The Mongre Hill is in the central eastern region of the modern Garo Hills district. It is on the north of the Mrig Wari in the Simsang River.

On the top of this hill one can get an extensive view of the surrounding hills. It is said in certain Achik folk stories that in very ancient days there was a flourishing village of *Matchadus* (a cannibal race of tiger-men) on the top of this hill. Some jack-trees said to have been planted by the *Matchadus* are still to be seen on the top of this hill. The top of this hill is said also to have been once converted into an open courtyard by Nokma Abong Chirepa.

The Achiks believe also that Ahni Apilpa Chini Galapa, the first man to acquire paddy seeds from Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa, for the first time since the beginning of the world, began to carry on *jhum* cultivation here for the first time and sowed paddy seeds and reaped the rich harvest of paddy for the first time since the world began.

THE CHIBOK DARE

The Chibok Dare or the Falls of the Chibok Stream⁶ in the south-western portion of the village-land of Dingrang Bawegiri,⁷ in the modern district of Garo Hills is a very imposing falls. One has to go down and up the site of the falls in order to fully admire their beauty.

In ancient days, the fairies are said to have haunted these falls. These fairies, who are believed by the Achiks to be the

children of Tengte Bandok Mikpil Ja'phil are said to be of human forms but diminutive in size.

During the rains, the falls present superlative beauty. Then the tremendous volume of water dashing and plunging over the prodigious walls of rock presents a majestic and most impressive spectacle. Especially, above the falls, it is an ideal place for a picnic. The left bank of the falls is accessible. Truly, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever". And the beauty of the Chibok Dare, loved by the fairies, will "never pass into nothingness".

THE NOKREK PEAKS

The Nokrek Peaks consist of three prominent peaks. They are the highest peaks of the Garo Hills district. Especially, the place where the Simsang takes its rise is an ideal spot for hunting. Here and there, are pure sparkling rills and ideal places for camping. One has to spend three days there, at least, and make excursions round about the peaks in order to fully appreciate the beauty of the top and the surrounding places.

Nokma Abong Chirepa and his queen Silme Dokkha spent their last days here. Signs of their habitation are still visible. They fled from their homes on the southern spur of Mongre Hill, overlooking the Mrig Wari, when their subjects rebelled against them.

THE REDINGSI WARI

The Redingsi Wari or the Pool of Redingsi in the Khakhija Stream, an important tributary of the Dareng River, is on the southern foot of the Meminram Peak of the Dura Range. It is one of the deepest pools in the Garo Hills district. A huge freshwater whale, having a large brilliant diamond on his head, is said to be living in the depth of this pool.

According to an ancient legend of the Achiks, here Gongga is said to have spent many of his most romantic days with his two lovers, catching fish, crabs and prawns, and bathing and swimming in the pool. The gigantic cotton tree (Kilbolma), which Gongga felled with the aid of Jarumeh-a Jabal Phante Okkhuangsi Jahpatchongsi, the god of Winds, is believed by

the Achiks to have grown by the side of this pool; some of its fossilized roots are still seen here.

It is an ideal pool for angling on a portable or rubber boat. The best time to visit this place is either before or after the rains.

THE GONGJA DARE

The Gongja Dare or the Fall of the Gongja Stream in the *Akhing*⁸ land of Aruak Nokatgiri⁹ is the highest waterfall in the Garo Hills district, being a sheer drop from the rocks, which are almost on a level with the hills around; but the volume of water is rather small. The rainy season is the best time to view this fall.

Immediately above the fall is the old site of a deserted village of the Rongmuthu clan of the Achik race. Here their strong and brave warriors dwelt in their hill fastness many decades ago. From this village on the hill in those days the stalwart brave warriors used to sally forth, with their six-cubits long *milams* and *spis* in their hands, for plundering raids far and down in the plains, spreading terror and devastation as far down as Dacca, until checked by the might of British arms, considerable scores years ago. Their mortal remains lay on these hills.

This Gongja Dare symbolizes matchless teardrops on the cheek of inexorable time over the long lost glories of the grand, old, old days, when independence, power and plenty were being enjoyed to overflowing by this once famous warlike clan in accordance with the then *Weltanschauung*, that is, the general world-theory, of the Achik race.

THE KHYLSYK DARE

The Khylsyk Dare or the Fall of Khylsyk on the Chibe Stream, in the northern portion of the *Akhing*—land of Aruak Nokatgiri, is a widespread, beautiful fall, surrounded on both banks by gigantic primitive trees, on the overhanging branches of which lay suspended the verdant small-leafed tentacles of various creepers in all their exquisite pensile beauty. It is said that the *Matchadus* used to haunt this fall in the olden days.

During rainy season the fall presents itself in its most enchanting beauty silhouetted amidst the overhanging charming natural arboreal decoration.

THE REHNANG DARE

The Rehnang Dare or the Fall of the Rehnang Stream in the Western portion of the *Akhing*-land of Aruakgiri¹⁰ is one of the most charming cascades in the District.

In ancient days a main pathway lay in front of the falls, across the stream. Strong and brave warriors used to haunt this falls to have their refreshing baths. Bathing in the fall was then believed to bring good luck to the bathers. *Rehnang* means *Good Luck in the offing*. During rainy season, when the volume of water is large, the beauty of this fall is immensely impressive.

THE MATRONGTUA DARE

The Matrongtua Dare or the Fall of Matrongtua on the Dapsi Stream, a tributary of the Chibe Stream, in the *Akhing*-land of Dapsigiri,¹¹ is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in the District, although the volume of water is rather small. To be able to fully appreciate the charming beauty of the fall, one has to go to the base of it and look at it. The sides of the fall are said to have been once the home of the goat-antelopes. Matrongtua means "the lair of the goat-antelopes (*Capricornis Sumatrensis*)."

At a little distance above the fall is a small stream, known as Dah-o-Dah-o. In ancient days, a brave man, named Dapsi, belonging to the Rongmuthu clan, and his son, who was a mere stripling, are said to have come upon two fierce-looking *Matchadus* (tiger-men) by chance, who were dividing a heap of fish between themselves, repeatedly muttering out "Dah-o-Dah-o," the meaning of which no one has interpreted up till now. A fierce fight ensued between the father and his son on one side and the two *Matchadus* on the other with the result that the *Matchadus* were both killed in the channel of the stream. Each of them fought with his *milam* and *spi*, which, in those grand old days, every male *Matchadu* and every male Achik unfailingly used to carry about with him wherever he went. The brave man and his brave son together returned home

in exuberant spirits, bringing the fishes and the heads of the *Matchadus*. To commemorate this episode the small stream has ever since been called "Dah-o-Dah-o" and the larger stream has been named after the brave man.

THE RONGMITHA FALLS

The Rongmitha Falls or the Falls of the Rongmitha Stream in the *Akhing*-land of Songmagre in the mid-eastern portion of Garo Hills is a series of three falls one above the other. The Rongmitha Stream rises in the western portion of the Nengmukjak Peak, the prominent peak in the eastern extremity of the Dura Range, and, flowing northward, falls into the Simsang River. The falls can be best viewed from a convenient spot in the channel of the Simsang River.

During the rainy season the falls presents such an attractive sight that anyone having once seen it, would not fail to forget it.

In ancient days the Achiks dreaded to approach this falls as they believed it to be the abode of Thehbyl Khore, a malicious spirit, who used to bring about madness or insanity upon any person intruding upon the falls. The little pool above the falls is still known as Thehbyl Wari or the Pool of Thehbyl.

ACHAMDAT DARE

Achamdat Dare or the Falls of Achamdat in the Rongdong Stream in the *Akhing* land of Badri-Songmong in the central eastern portion of the Garo Hills District is a very fine Falls, being a sheer drop of water over a precipice of rock. The best view of the Falls can be secured from a convenient spot on one or the other bank of the Stream below the Falls.

One Achik legend says that in ancient days the gigantic *Matchadu* warriors used to frequent this Falls during summer days to enjoy shower baths beneath the Falls. The name of Achamdat is believed by the Achiks to have been given to this Falls by the *Matchadus*.

CHIINMA DARE

Chiinma Dare or the Falls of the Rangjam in the Rongdu River, a tributary of the Ringdi River, is within Khasia and

Jhantia Hills, near Garo Hills. The Falls is a sheer drop from a wall of rock-cliffs of considerable height. The local people believe that the vicinity of the Falls is inhabited by evil spirits who can bring about insanity to human beings. As a rule, this Falls is, therefore, avoided by the Achiks up to this day.

THE NANGKILDING ROCK

The Nangkilding Rock is an enormous piece of Rock on a hillock in the village land of Darang Petchong, in the north-eastern portion of the modern Garo Hills. One can enjoy an extensive view on the top of this Rock. It is believed by the Achiks that this enormous piece of Rock was once the seat of a guardian God of the local inhabitants, during wars against the aliens.

THE RONGON MATRONGTUA DARE

The Rongon Matrongtua Dare in the village-land of Khakwagiri in the mid-eastern portion of the modern Garo Hills is one of the most beautiful falls in the District. The Rongon River rises in the eastern basin of the Meminram Peak of the Tura Range and falls into the Simsang River at Rongbinggiri. The sides of the falls were once the home of the hill antelopes.

THE ROCK CAVES ON THE CHIBE

There are three separate Rock Caves on the right bank of the Chibe Stream in the village-lands of Nengkhong, Dapsigiri and Nokatgiri in the mid-south-eastern portion of the modern Garo Hills. One of the Caves is in the village land of Nokatgiri and the other two are in the village-lands of Nengkhong and Dapsigiri, not far from the spot where the Chibe stream re-emerges from its sub-terranean channel before it falls into the Rongdik River, which itself falls into the Simsang River at Barkar.

One of these caves beside the lower stages of the Chibe Stream is called Tehteng Khol or Tengte Khol, that is, the Cave of the Elf. Each of these caves is several miles long. Gas lamps or "Petromax Lanterns" provide the best light to explore these caves.

Inside these caves are myriads of bats. The sub-terranean regions inside the caves, which are the mysterious winding ways, is a world, each by itself, where eternal darkness reigns. Curious-shaped stalagmites and stalactites and spacious hall-like places abound in many places inside these Caves.

THE ROCK CAVE OF BATS AT SIJU

The *Do'bakkhol* or the Rock Cave of Bats on the right Bank of the Simsang River at Siju is the most frequented cave and one of the most wonderful known caves in the world. There are beautiful stalagmites, cylindrical and conical in form, and curious-shaped stalactites in many places in the interior of this cave. There are innumerable devious ways, wide spacious hall-like places and many pools of water, some of which are neck-deep and in which blind white fish live. A stream of water issues out of the cave. On entering the cave one has to proceed along the subterranean channel of this stream.

THE ROCK CAVE AT DARANG ERA AHNING

The Rock Cave at Darang Era Ahning is an inland cave several miles long. It has many devious ways and wide spaces inside.

In ancient days, the Achik ancestors dreaded to approach this cave and all these caves, believing them to be the abodes of evil and malicious spirits.

THE DOROGMANI RONGKOL

The Dorogmani Rongkol or the Rock Cave of Dorogma is by the source of the Norang Stream at the southern feet of the Nokrek Peaks in Garo Hills. It is said to contain thirty-seven rooms inside. It is believed to be an abode of Dorogma, the Tiger Queen, and the nucleus of innumerable royal tigers.

THE RONGMA RENGBANG DARE

The Rongma Rengbang Dare or the Fall of the Rongma Rengbang Stream on the western portion of the *Akhing* land of Rangmalgiri, is close to the upper stage of the Simsang River.

The falls is wide-spread and look more beautiful when viewed from a convenient spot on the opposite bank of the Simsang River.

Gonga is said to have had a bath under this falls when he wandered far and wide in quest of cotton, taking with him his two nieces, who were, as well, his wives. The local inhabitants assert that a giant crab lives in the pool at the bottom of the falls.

THE ARBELLA HILL TOP

The Arbella Hill Top is the peak of a northern branch of the Dura Range. It commands a wide view. In fair weather during summer, if one stands on this top he can see the mighty Chuma Mountains (i.e., the Himalayas) on the north. There is an Inspection Bunglow on this top as well as a road from Tura to Damra.

It is said that in ancient days the forefathers of the Abengs, a division of the Achiks, who were the pioneer settlers in the north and west of this Hill, mustered strong once on the top of this Hill to view the land they were going to enter. The Achiks also call this spot Sonabal.

RONGRENGGIRI

This was an old village on the right bank of the Simsang River in the Central portion of the Garo Hills. Opposite the old village, on the left bank of the Simsang River, the Expeditionary Force of 1872-73, which was sent against the Achiks in these Hills, established its headquarters. For a number of years a platoon was stationed here and at Rewak, another old village on the bank of the lower stage of the Simsang River in the District.

By the order of the Commanding Officer of the said Expeditionary Force more than five hundred human heads, collected from the neighbouring Achik villages, were burnt on the narrow neck of land close to the place where the old Inspection Bunglow stood. *Simul* cotton tree (*Bombax Malabaricum*) was planted over the ashes of the burnt heads and can still be seen. The Inspection Bunglow was shifted in 1951 to the confluence of the Darim River with the Simsang River.

THE AHNANG WARI

The Ahnang Wari or the Pool of Ahnang in the Ildek River in the north-eastern portion of the Garo Hills district is a deep pool surrounded by cliffs.

In olden days the Achiks dreaded this pool believing it to be the abode of a god Ahnang and his brother Dilkhang, who used to cause insanity or madness among mankind.

It is also believed by the Achiks that Gongga had thrown into this pool the anvil and hammer of the Goddess Dakgipa Rugipa Din-gipa Bahbra. (*See the Story of Gongga*). The best time to visit this pool is in the dry season.

MITHDEI SILKHAM WARI

The Mithdei Silkham Wari in the Rongtit Stream is one of the deepest inland pools in the District. The best time to visit this pool is either before or after the rains.

MOGMA DARE

The Mogma Dare or the Fall of Mogma in the Manda Chichura Stream in the north-eastern portion of Garo Hills is a fine sheer drop of water. Not many years ago, the portion of the rock, which formed the ridge at the very topmost bed of the stream of the fall, enhancing the beauty of the fall, has been broken off. In the rainy season the sound of this fall is heard as far as Damra. The Achiks believe it to be the abode of the god Mogma, the brother of Ahnang, the son of Asni Dingsni. The rainy season is the best time to view this falls.

WERAM JAMBAL

The Weram Jambal is a hillock in the land of Rongjeng Jambalgittim in the north-eastern portion of Garo Hills. The whole hillock seems to be a massive piece of rock, on the top of which one can get an extensive view all around.

In ancient days the main thoroughfare to the markets at Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding and Songsak Rongbal passed through the eastern foot of this hillock. Beautiful, bewitching

Achik women used to swing on the spiry roots of a gigantic banyan tree that was growing by the rock, singing songs of love and romance to the passers-by.

THE KHOASI HILL

The Khoasi Hill, which is of considerable height, is in the north-eastern portion of the Garo Hills District. At the foot of the hill is an old village of Raja Simla.

The Khoasi Hill is believed by the Achiks to be the abode of the goddess Khoasi, an Aphrodite, who wields an immense power over tigers. It is believed also by the Achiks that roots of philtral herbs, aphrodisiac plants and *muni* plant were in very ancient days brought by Khorengpa Mikking Banda Kobinpa Jahtheng Chuh-a, the patriarchal head of the kites, from the subterranean regions, and dropped on the top of this Hill.

The Goddess Khoasi is said to be the eldest sister of the goddesses Ahratcha Rongbare and Durama Imbama, who dwelt together; but afterwards, dissensions arose among them and they separated to their respective present dwelling places.

THE CHENGA BENGTA TANKS

The Chenga Benga Tanks are the deep twin pools of water a few miles west of Garobadha in the western portion of Garo Hills. These twin pools are said to have been excavated by two Achik Princes known as Chenga and Benga.

A little distance from these ponds at the north on the other bank of the Ganol Stream is another deep pool which is said to have been excavated by Pagla Raja. The Ganol River, after much erosion, had washed off the old site of the palace of Pagla Raja, a few miles below Garobadha. But the deep pond, which was belonged to him, still remains intact at a place, known as Purana Putimari, on the right bank of the Ganol Stream.

KODALDHOWA TANK

Not very far from Boldamgiri village in the south-western portion of the Garo Hills District is a deep tank which is said to have belonged to an old Achik Chieftain of that area,

who was known as Lengtha Raja. Kodaldhowa means "washing of hoes." It is said that the servants of Lengtha Raja used to wash their hoes here after their labours in his fields.

KAMAKHYA

The Hill on the left bank of the Songdu River, which the non-Achiks now call Kamakhya, was called Salaram Mithdeichak by the Achiks in very ancient days.

The first temple was built on the top of the hill by an Achik woman, named Nunui Nanokhi for Phojhou, the goddess of Pro-lificacy, during the time of a tyrannous king of Assam, named Lilasingh.

At this time a division of the Achiks settled at Salaram Mithdeichak and Guaakte (the modern Gauhati).

Raja Lilasingh made aggressions on the Achiks, who stubbornly resisted him. The following brave Achik warriors were leaders among the Achiks in their fight against Raja Lilasingh :—

Gume, Rethi, Ashak, Jarin, Dompe, Jirik, Saksho, Washang, Akhuth, Bingring, Bori, Diring Kepesha, Jachang, Silma, Rakha.

After the death of Nunui Nanokkhi, the temple fell into the hands of the aliens who continued to worship the goddess under the name of Kamakhya. The stone-carvings on the old way-sides along the pathway up to the temple and under the precincts of the temple itself all bear the figures of Achik women.

THE VASHISHTHA TEMPLE

The Vashishtha Temple on the left bank of the Bharalu Stream, about four miles south of Gauhati town, was also originally built by the Achiks at about the same time the temple of Kamakhya was first built. The votaries of this temple were Achik women. (*see Dr. Wade's History of Assam*).

MATCHA MELARAM

On the south of Boko in the District of Kamrup, there is a big cave. The Achiks believe that the regions on the east, north-east and south-east of Boko were once inhabited by the Matchadus in very ancient days. These Matchadus, who were half-men and half-tigers, were said to have been dispersed by

the Achik warriors under Kotta Nangrepa Muga Dingcheпа, Rakwa Nengjapa, Urja Rakgipa and Maran Dalgipa, who made a surprise attack upon seven hundred Matchadus in what is now known as Matcha Melaram or Bagh Mela Pahar in the southern bank of the District of Kamrup, not far from Boko.

RADINGGA SADINGGA

Radingga Sadingga is a cluster of massive pieces of rocks at a little distance from the fourth mile-post on the Boko-Hahim Road. It is on the right hand side, as you proceed from Boko to Hahim. The huge rocks, which lay in the form of a square arch seem to have been raised by some giants of old.

The Achiks believe that they had been set up by two Achik brothers of immense strength, who were known as Radingga and Sadingga, to be used as a place of resort for their lovelorn younger sisters who were said to be able to reconcile separated lovers and comfort disappointed lovers by their bewitching songs of love and romance.

THE OLD SITE OF BISIKKROM RANI'S PALACE

The old site of Bisikkrom Rani's Palace is in the northern portion of Mymensingh District a little distance south of Baghmara, an important Garo Village on the border of Mymensingh and the Garo Hills Districts.

The abandoned site, known as Mad Garh, is on a hillock, known as Dok Ahbri, where crumbled brick-work is still seen. A tank of considerable size and reputed to be very deep, now nearly mantled over with floating water-weeds, is still found near the ruined brick-work.

The following legend is current among the Achiks regarding this site of Bisikkrom Rani's Palace :—

About the time when the petty Achik principality of Chuchong (now Shusung) passed into alien hands, the *avatar* or incarnate of Bisikkrom Rani, the Queen Earth Spirit, started to build an inimitable Palace on this spot. The building of it was being silently carried out only at nights by invisible workers. No human being was allowed to see the Palace during the process of building.

When the Palace was springing up into being, Durga Charan Singh, the then Raja of Shusung, sent word to Bisikkrom Rani to the effect that he desired to see the building of the Palace. Bisikkrom Rani sent him the following message :—"Please be good enough to resist the temptation to see the Palace under construction. You may come and see it when its building is completed."

But the Raja could not resist the temptation to see the Palace under construction. Disregarding the modest request of Bisikkrom Rani, he started from his home, riding on an elephant to come over to the spot.

Now the walls of the Palace under construction were fitted with mystic plates of glass, so charmed with the properties of *Dykge Janera*, the Magic-Mirror Herb, that they would mirror in them the miniature figures of all persons and things in any part of the world.

While the Raja was but a few paces from his home. Bisikkrom Rani's dog furiously barked, seeing him starting out riding on an elephant as mirrored in a plate of charmed glass on the eastern wall of the Palace. Bisikkrom Rani at once saw the same and ordered the workers to pull down the half-finished Palace. She enclosed herself in an iron-chest and fled, not drowned, into her own cistern.

THE AGRONG WARI

There is a pool in the Simsang River just a little below Bong Bazar, Baghmara. This pool is known as Agrong Wari or the Pool of Agrong. In ancient days the channel of the Simsang River was narrow, but deep ; in those days the Agrong Wari was immensely deep indeed.

Nowadays, through much erosion on the right bank, the channel of the River is much widened at this stage and the water has become more shallow. The pool is silted with sand and what remains as a pool is a mere apology for it. The pool is still called Agrong Wari by the Achiks.

Agrong was a mighty Achik chieftain in olden days. He belonged to Daring clan and his wife belonged to Rangsha clan of the Achik race. He fixed up his latrine across the River immediately below the pool so that in dry season the channel

was practically filled up with filth caused by him and hundreds of his servants.

Exasperated with his polluting the river thus, the then Raja of Shusung hired some fishermen to kill him. The fishermen came up in thirty country boats, pretended friendship with him and killed him in the pool by means of their nets while he dived for fish in it. Ever since the pool is known as Agrong Wari.

THE BALJEK AGAL

The Baljek Agal is a considerably extensive grassy plain at Rongshep-Ahding-giri north of Tura in Garo Hills. The soil is stony here and the trees are few.

Various wild flowers and herbs in this plain bloom in the months of April and May, when it is the best time to visit it.

This plain is believed by the Achiks to be an *ahjri* (fallow land) of Misi Saljong's *jamang* (a small plot of *jhum* cultivation), where buffer-crops were sown.

THE RANGGIRA HILL

The Ranggira Hill on the north-west of Tura Town is the main western peak of the ridge of the hill contiguous from the Arbella or Sonabal Hills. For the inhabitants of the Tura town it makes a prominent landmark. It is also called Nanggira.

The Achiks believe that in very, very olden days the god, Misi Saljong carried on *jhum* cultivation on the Ranggira Hill at the same time when Bone Nirepa Jane Nitepa carried on similar cultivation on the Rongtham Bisyk Agal Bri and Duhmerong Ducherong, the father of Goera, did the self same cultivation at Maadini Bisyk Spruni Rongdik.

It is also believed by the Achiks that in the olden days the pioneer settlers, the forefathers of the Ahbengs first cleared jungle for *jhum* cultivation on this Hill with one hand, grasping their *milams* and *spis* with the other for fear of enemies and tigers.

As late as the advent of the British rule, the Achiks used to perform sacrificial offerings of human beings to their tutelary local deity by the side of an old pond on the top of this Hill.

It is also said that, while he was living on the Nokrek Peaks in his last days, Nokma Abong Chirepa carried on *jhum* cultivation on the top of this Hill.

LANDU ROCK CAVE

About six miles south of the modern townlet of Boko in Kamrup District, Assam, is a hill known as Landu Hill, containing a famous Rock Cave known as Dualguri. It is believed by the Achiks to be the abode of the *Matchadus* (a race of tiger-men). It is also believed by the Achiks that one ancient Achik king, known as Arimbit Raja, entered into this Rock Cave to save himself from his enemies and never came out again.

A number of the material signs on stones in this Rock Cave which are known as *Rani Jahsuram* (the place where a Queen used to wash her legs), *Gonggna* (Jew's harp), *Rongslai* (the Stone-Gun), *Paroa-Baha* (the roost of the Doves), *Sogin Chiringram* (the Watering-Place of the Vultures), *Matcha Melaram* (the Mustering-Place of Tigers), and *Matcha Dingram* (the Battlefield of Tigers) remains identifiable in this Rock Hill.

The Rock Cave in the Landu Hill in this ancient Garo settlement is famous in the Garo Traditional Accounts and Folklore.

A belief persists among the Garos that Arimbit Raja still slumbers inside this Landu Hill and that, if no mention of his name is made for ten generations, he will one day break forth to restore to the Achiks (the Garos) their pristine splendour.

THE PINDENGRU HILL

The Pindengru Hill, 2986 feet high, is about twenty-five miles to the north-east of the Balphakram Hill in the south-eastern portion of Garo Hills.

It is believed by Achiks to be the place of residence of God Shiva in ancient days. On the south-eastern side of this hill there is an exceedingly beautiful Rock Cave, which is known to the Achiks as *Shiv Thakurni Nok*, that is, the *Home of Shiv Thakur*.

South of this hill, on the rock-channel of the Moheshkholla River, similitudes of marks in the forms of large-sized human

footprints are visible. These are believed by the Achiks to be the footprints of Dikki, Bandi, Matchru Garikra, Shangmaracha and other heroes, most famous in the Achik Epiclore.

Geologically, the Pindengru Hill is noted for its mineral deposits of intrinsic value.

THE CHANDODENGGA HILLOCK

The Chandodengga Hillock, 1377 feet in height, is just on the east of the Mahadeo River in the south-eastern portion of Garo Hills. It is also called *Ringchanchok*, which means the *Leaning Boat*. On the southern side of this Hillock is a piece of massive rock in the form of an upturned boat, which is called *Dikkini Ring*, that is, Dikki's Boat. On the top of this Hillock there are seven massive pieces of rocks, which are in the forms of Achik dug-outs.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, in ages long gone by, this Hillock was on the seashore; that one demi-god, named Ago-Dinggopa, followed by Chando, a merchant-prince, while bringing boats laden with untold riches for Dikki, the most renowned hero in the Achik Epiclore, met with disaster here, having got his boats capsized, and, that, therefore, this Hillock contains within its bowels indescribable earthly wealth, which is being guarded over by the theophanic spirit of Chando, the merchant-prince.

ARENG PATALS

Proceeding about five miles and a half north from the Achik Village Gurpani, at a little distance to the north of Rongara on the left bank of the Rongdi River, in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills, one finds three perpendicular rock-holes on the channel of a small stream. These rock-holes are known as *Arenz Patals*, which literally mean *Carnivorous Rocks*. These rock-holes, which are not dangerously deep, are the natural death-traps (*Januarka Chumpuk*) for animals and birds.

Any bird, reptile, rodent and animal, happening to fall within the circle of spell of these rock-holes, is inevitably doomed to die slowly at these rock-holes. They are, however, found to be harmless to human beings.

JOGU RONGSAL

Proceeding about three miles and five furlongs from the Areng Patals in the north-easterly direction, one finds a rock jutting out from the bank of the Mahadeo River. This piece of rock is called *Jogu Rongsal*, which literally means *the Rock Drawn Up by Jogu*. This protruding rock measures seven cubits outside and, inside the earth, this rock measures, according to Geological surveys, one mile, three furlongs and seventeen feet. On both the external sides of this rock are similitudes of human footprints, which are believed by the Achiks to be the footprints of Giting, the beloved spouse of Dikki.

According to one Achik legend, Jugi, a demi-god of a man in very ancient days, proposed to construct a rock-bridge, studded with brilliant diamonds, for Giting across the Mahadeo River within the course of one night. While Jogu was strenuously tugging out the rock from the bowels of the earth, he overheard the sound of cock-crowing and concluded in his mind that dawn has already come. He was also fully aware that dawn cometh not twice to awaken men. So, he had to abandon the proposed task. Later on, setting her feet on the rock, Giting expressed profound lamentations over the unfinished task, which was undertaken by Jogu on her behalf. To the Achiks, this piece of rock symbolizes the *Rock of Unfulfilled Desires*, which has a niche in the eternal scheme of things.

THE WAKKABI

Not far from the Plateau of the Balphakram Hill, in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills, there is a clear-water natural pond, known as *Wakkabi*. Portions of this pond fall within Khasia Hills. In this pond *sea* conch-shells are found. Water from the Wakkabi drains off through the underground channel of the Khanai Stream.

THE JAKSONGRAM HILLOCK

Jaksongram Hillock, 1206 feet in height, is about five miles west of Baghmara, Garo Hills. It is renowned as an ancient settlement of the *Matchadus* (a race of tiger-men).

Jaksongram means the *Place where a Hand is Raised*.

According to an Achik legend, a man from a village in the vicinity of this Hillock was once killed by a tiger. Having carried away the body to the top of this Hillock, the man-eater had bitten off the right-hand of the man and stacked it up on the ground, planting the hand in such a way that the palm and fingers remained upraised as if raised by a living human being.

Kilimrim, Ahdawil, Matchadu Songdongram (the Habitat of the Matchadus), Matchadu Halweram (the Ploughland of the Matchadus), Deawa Galonram and Matcha Nokphante (the Bachelor House of the Tigers) are the renowned spots related to the Jaksongram Hillock. At a place on its top, where there is a stone monolith raised up by Surveyors, one can enjoy extensive views far down into the paddy-fields of Mymensingh District.

THE JADIGINDAM

The Jadigindam is a plateau in the *Akhing*-land of village Dapsigiri, about sixteen miles north of Baghmara, Garo Hills. It is 1185 feet high, surrounded on the north and on the east by hills, which are separated from it by the Chibe River. On the north of it, the Chibe River flows underground. It is believed by the Achiks that there is an exceedingly deep pool of water in the underground channel of the Chibe River.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, residing in the spacious rock-caves beneath the Plateau, hundreds of the *Matchadus* (a race of half-man and half-tiger) used to carry on *jhum* cultivation on this Plateau in the olden days; but, in the course of time, the *Matchadus* were completely driven out by a squad of intrepid Achik warriors, belonging to the Rongmuthu clan, who ultimately reclaimed it and settled on it.

THE BOTDRA HILLOCK

The Botdra Hillock is within the Baghmara Reserved Forest on the east of the Simsang River in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills.

An Achik legend maintains that, once in ancient days, an Achik Raja, named Botdra, who was of gigantic physical proportions, inhabited on the top of this Hillock; that he required one maund of husked-rice to be cooked for his one meal; that each day he consumed full three maunds of husked-rice cooked for

his breakfast, mid-day meal and supper and that, finding no woman for himself fit to marry, he had to remain a bachelor all his days.

THE STANDING STONES AT MANDU

The standing stones at Mandu are within the *Akhing*-land of Darang-Petchong in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

According to an ancient Achik legend, there was an exquisitely beautiful Achik lady, named Aje Gilje Dawe Changse, the younger sister of Dingara Radingga. With a view to sit on them and enjoy the beauty of his younger sister's legs and thighs, when she should pull up her petticoat to keep it off the flowers of the forget-me-nots, Dingara Radingga raised up the huge stones with his own hands and also sowed seeds of the forget-me-nots round about the raised stones.

THE AHRATCHA-RONGBARE HILL

The Ahratcha-Rongbare Hill, the highest peak of which is 2562 feet high, is on the east of the Ildek River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills. The northern part of this Hill is shaped like a long wall of rocks.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that the goddess represented by the Ahratcha-Rongbare Hill is the elder sister of the goddess represented by the Dura Hill and the younger sister of the goddess represented by the Khoasi-Minduri Hill in the Achikland.

THE FAMOUS ROCKS ON THE KHANAI RIVER

The Khanai River in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills flows through an underground channel, which is about four miles in length and which is called Kaidang Chimitdap. There are three famous rocks on the Khanai River.

The first is one extensive platform of rock, known as *Goerani Rongbrak*, that is, *the Rock of Goera, the Thunder and Lightning Divinity*, situated on the south-west of Village Kaidang Chimitdap. This open stretch of rock is about two furlongs in length.

The second is the famous wedge-like rock, known as *Atisia*,

that is, the *Death-Trap* for *Elephants*, situated just a little below Village Kosigiri. Here wild elephants are used to be trapped and done to death by the local villagers.

The third is a strategic-looking massive piece of rock, known as *Momdar Raja*, not far from Village Kosigiri. An ancient Achik legend maintains that, because of its strategic nature, one Achik chieftain, named Momdar Raja, established his permanent place of residence on the top of this Rock.

DIMBIL BRI PHALWANG AHDING

Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding is a small but famous plateau in the *Akhing*-land of Village Baringgiri in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

Numberless ancient Achik legends, which are handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, maintain that, in very ancient days, a bustling market was used to be held on the plateau of Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding; that the market was patronized by men, all terrestrial creatures and by all the major divinities and that the market was flourishing in such an age when heaven and earth met and adored each other.

RONGERAM-GAMBAKSIM

The ancient sacred place, known as Rongeram-Gambaksim and famous in lore and traditions of the Achiks of the central area of Garo Hills, is about nine miles south-east of the ancient site of the famous old Village of Rongrenggiri. The place is now incorporated in the *Akhing*-land of Village Rongbinggiri. Rongeram-Gambaksim is on the right bank of the Rong-on River, a tributary of the Simsang River.

An ancient Achik traditional account maintains that, just after Abong Noga Raja was swept out of power as the paramount Chieftain of all the hills round about, Rongeram-Gambaksim became the seat of the mighty leaders of the once strong Federation of the independent Achiks of the area; that here at Rongeram-Gambaksim were born the most famous and strongest warriors, who never backed down before any foe and who successfully stemmed the tide of the repeated non-Achik invasions from the North and thus preserved the proud Achik or Mande independence until the Federation, known as the *Rong-*

bing-Dual Bilbang, was smashed up by the Expeditionary Force in 1870-71, and that the last of the leaders of the *Rongbing-Dual Bilbang*, who were the last of the Achiks ever to keep up the torches of freedom and independence burning in these hills, suffered the severest penalties at the hands of the Expeditionary Force for their sturdy honest independence and organized resistance.

Of all the leaders of the *Rongbing-Dual Bilbang*, the most famous was Daleng Dehjepa, whose father is named Dimot of the Chada *chatchi* (clan) and whose mother is called Nogang of the Rongmuthu *chatchi*. His wife belonged to the Raksam *chatchi*. He was of immense physical proportions, his breast from one armpit to the other measuring three cubits and one span. He was very much respected for his nobility of character and independent views. Through his sagacity and astute diplomacy, he organized the *Rongbing-Dual Bilbang* into a strong and perfect sort of federation of more than seven hundred villages in the mid-portion of the Hills, now known as Garo Hills. He was born to be a hero at Rongeram-Gambaksim.

Of the birth of this gifted son, a folksong is still sung amongst the same matrilineal group, in which he was born, as follows :

"Rongeramo merama mibisia,
Gambaksimo songdongo,
Ba'ejok me'asa."

That is,

"On the Rock of Rongeram, we spread *mibisa* (finest
small-grained rice) in the sun to dry.
While we settled at Gambaksim,
We were blessed with the birth of a male child."

According to the current traditional accounts of the Achiks of the mid-portions of Garo Hills, Daleng Dehjepa had contributed more than any other leader had done for the corporate safety and survival of the Achiks of the mid-portions of the Hills, now known as Garo Hills, during the unsettled period in the history of the Achik race after the expulsion and death of Abong Noga Raja.

SANGKATI WAKMETOM

An ordinary-looking place, known as Sangkati Wakmetom in the *Akhing*-land of Village Darang-Petchong in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills is believed by the Achiks to be the ancient site of a famous market, which was patronized, not only by human beings, but also by the *Matchadus* (race of half-men and half-tigers), by ghosts and by nymphs, naiads and gnomes of the woods.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, in the very ancient days, at the Sangkati Wakmetom market men and certain divinities made bargainings not only for material wealth but also for spiritual wealth and that then it was an age when men and gods and goddesses lived peacefully together in the best of neighbourliness.

CHIBRASNI WAHGECHONGSNI

The holy place, known as Chibrasni Wahgechongsni, on the bank of the upper stage of the Damring River and in close neighbourhood of Villages Rongribo and Kalak, is in the central northern part of Garo Hills. *Chibrasni* means *the Confluence of the Seven Streams* and *Wahgechongsni* means *Seven Clumps of Wahge (Bambusa tulda)*. Certain people used to add the name of *Rama Cholsni*, meaning *the Parting of Seven Pathways*, to the name of the holy place.

Ordinarily, this place does not appear to be imposing; but it is a most sacred place to the devoted Achik priests, to whom nothing is real but the spirits, who dwell in the tangible material universe.

A number of ancient Achik legends and lore about this place serves to show that Chibrasni Wahgechongsni is a highly spiritualised and magnetised spot in the whole of the Achikland; that it has been the meeting-place of men and certain divinities and that, from the religious viewpoint of the Achiks, certain incidental meetings of divinities of different categories, their mutual discussions on vital schemes of things and their decisions, whatsoever, on them had taken place at this holy place. In innumerable sacrificial songs on occasions of solemn ceremonies, the name of Chibrasni Wahgechongsni is always mentioned by the Achik priests. Indeed, the very name of Chibrasni Wahgech-

ongsni remains for ever sacrosanct in the mouths of devoted Achik priests. As a sanctuary of no mean importance in the priestly lore of the Achiks, Chibrasni Wahgechongsni remains unchallenged.

THE PLACES OF INTEREST ON THE RONGMITHA

(i) The rock-cave on the left bank of the Rongmitha River, in the *Akhing*-land of Songmagiri in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills, is stated by certain local elderly villagers to be several miles in length.

(ii) The *Janggilbret* (literally, *the Crack on the Back*) is a massive piece of rock, with a lengthy crack on it, on the right bank of the Rongmitha. An ancient Achik legend maintains that this rock was the body of a warrior-god, whose back was cracked by a flying missile of an enemy.

(iii) The *Balwa Skipram* (literally, *the Place Where Winds Swoop Down Upon*) is on the left bank of the Rongmitha, just a little away to the south of the *Janggilbret*. An ancient Achik legend maintains that, in very ancient days, strong concentrated gusts of the winds once swooped down, as if in a lump mass, upon the massive towering rocks at this place with such force that they were simply squeezed down into the bowels of the Earth and that only the topmost portions of the once frowning rocks are now visible on the bank of the River.

(iv) The *Rongkram* (literally, *the Stone-Drum*), a drum-shaped piece of rock, on the right bank of the River, gives out a resounding ringing sound when beaten with a piece of hard material.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that *the Rongkram* was once a real drum used in solemn ceremonies and turned into stone; that it was once owned by a race of demi-gods, who, once in a heroic age in the dim past, settled in this part of the heroic land, which the place was once, and that, once in ages long gone by, the place, where now the *Rongkram* lies, was the birthplace of saints, seers and sages, who were ahead of their countrymen in their ideas, visions and on their looking at the problems of life.

(v) The *Gana Minokram* (literally, *the Place where a Gana or petticoat was swallowed*), on the left bank of the River, is a place where a rock is stated to have actually swallowed a petticoat

of a woman. According to an ancient Achik legend, at this place there was a rock which had actually swallowed a *gana* or petticoat, which was put on it by one ancient Achik woman, while bathing in the River.

The Rongmitha River has beautiful cascades just before it joins the Simsang River at Village Songmagiri.

THE RONGSIMPHANG

The Rongsimphang (literally, *a black Rock*) is a few miles away to the east of Village Dohbu in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

Round about the Rongsimphang is a wide grassy plain, where certain herbs of medicinal value abundantly grow.

In the old legends of the Achiks the Rongsimphang was renowned as the site of an ancient market, which was patronized by human beings, by *Matchadus* and by the higher order of land-animals.

THE CHRAMPHANG ANTI

The Chramphang Anti or the Market of Chramphang on the left bank of the Simsang River in the *Akhing*-land of Village Dolwarigiri in the mid-portion of Garo Hills is believed by the Achiks to be the oldest market in the Achikland. The market still continues at the place up to this day.

Originally, the market was held here under the shade of a gigantic *Chram* tree (*Artocarpus Chaplasha*), which was growing on the site and which was destroyed by a storm about seventy-five years ago.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that Chramphang Anti was first started by the stalwart leaders of the *Rongbing-Dual Bilbang* more than sixteen decades before the advent of the British rule in the hills and that previously numbers of *Matchadus* (half-man and half-tiger beings), attired in garbs of full-fledged Achik householders, used to join in the motley crowd of men at this market, selling their own wares and purchasing *rangs* (valuable gongs), *ripboks* (strings of precious beads), *milams* (two-edged Achik swords) and *spis* (rectangular Achik shields).

THE ROCK CAVE AT CHIGITCHAKGIRI

The Rock Cave, known as *Tetengkol*, in the *Akhing*-land of Village Chigitchakgiri on the bank of the upper stage of the Rompha River, about twenty-one miles north-west of Baghmara, Garo Hills, is one of the most wonderfully beautiful rock caves in the Achikland.

Inside this Rock Cave there is a cotlike rock, which is said to be the bed of *Tetengs* (*Elfs*), and an exquisitely beautiful pathway leading northward into the depths of the interior. In the Rock Cave, one finds also a large basket-like piece of rock, which the local Achiks call *Tetengni Jengkok*, that is, *the Big Basket of Teteng*. It is not known well how long this Rock Cave is. After going on and on continually for six hours, with flaming dried bamboo-torches in hands, one finds it but very little explored.

At the entrance to this Rock Cave, there stand three massive pillar-like rocks, which are wonderfully beautiful and which vividly reminds one of the Corinthian columns of ancient Greek ornate architecture.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, in ancient days, the *Tetengs* or *Tengtes*, which are diminutive man-like creatures, having their toes pointing backwards, used to abide in this Rock Cave, and that these *Tengtes* (*Joukinies*) were then living in friendly terms with human beings.

THE ROCK CAVE ON THE BHUGI RIVER

The rock cave in the *Aching*-land of Village Nokatgiri on the bank of the upper stage of the Bhugi River, south-east of the Nokrek Peak of the Tura Range, is a beautiful cave in the Achikland. This rock cave, even when partially explored, presents a world of its own.

As one enters this rock cave, carrying flaming torches of dried bambooes in hand, he encounters a large number of pythons and boa-constrictors, lying snugly coiled up in the cosy corners. So long as one does not harass or tease them, these slimy creatures remain immobile and harmless.

THE MATBILKOL IN THEBRONGGIRI

The Matbilkol or the Cave of Bears in the *Akhing*-land of Thebronggiri, fourteen miles north of Tura, has a spacious open-

ing. It is believed by the local villagers to be an abode of bears. But, when really explored, carrying burning bamboo torches in hand, the interior of the rock cave has been found to contain no bears at all.

THE BALWAKOL PEAK

The Balwakol Peak, 1962 feet in height, about fifteen miles north of Tura and in the *Akhing*-land of Thebronggiri, is a pleasant spot in the Achikland.

The local villagers assert that in olden days gusts of wind used to issue forth from the bowels of the earth through a crevice on a spot of this peak ; but, that, during the severe earthquake on the 12th June, 1897, the crevice or hole on the peak had been clogged up. A similitude of a crevice is still visible on the top of the peak.

An old Achik legend maintains that there are huge deposits of pure gold deep down inside the Balwakol Peak and that, in olden days, large bars of pure gold were found plentifully scattered in the channels of the two streams flowing westward from the Peak.

THE RONGBING DARE

The Rongbing Dare or the Waterfall of the Rongbing River in the *Akhing*-land of Village Rongbinggiri in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills District is a beautiful and imposing waterfall.

During the rains, when the River is in spate, the tremendous volume of water, dashing and plunging over the rugged prodigious walls of rock, presents a most impressive spectacle, when viewed from a vantage point below the Falls.

DENGRENG KITIK WARI CHORA

The deep eddying pool in the Simsang River, known as Dengreng Kitik Wari Chora, in the *Akhing*-land of Village Chimagiri, in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills, is sacred to the Garos.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that Dengreng Kitik Wari Chora was the *chigat* (watering-place) of Dimrimpa Dimsimpa Gaeripa Singeripa, the ancient patriarch of Mande, who first tasted death among mankind.

MATMA WARI

The Matma Wari or the pool of Matma (*Buffalo*) in the Simsang River in the *Akhing*-land of Village Chimagiri in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills is renowned in the Achikland as the original and the first *chigat* (watering-place) of Abong Noga Raja, the Paramount Achik Sovereign of all the Hills, now known as Garo Hills.

MATCHUKI NONGMLONG WARI

The Matchuki Nongmlong Wari in the Simsang River at Dohbakkol in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills is renowned in the unwritten annals of the Achik race on account of the fact that a stone-pillar was raised up near the pool in ancient days, with due solemn ceremonies, by the leading heroic forebears of the Achiks and of the Khasis to seal up the eternal Achik-Khasi friendship. The commonly-understood eternal message from this stone-pillar by the pool is something as follows :—

"This is to call out to the unborn generations of the Achiks and the Khasis : Mark well, ye future men and women of the eternally-united Achik-Khasi race, that : Irresistible strength lies in unity and that the future does not belong to the men and women who doubt, but to those who believe, to those who have faith. Yea, indeed, the future does not belong to the timid but to the brave ; it does not belong to the mean and the wicked but to the strong and the noble ; it does not belong to those who hate, but to those who love."

Not long ago, this stone-pillar has been noticed to have been uprooted. It is still lying on the spot, fallen and uncared for.

THE NOSARI BANDARI

The Nosari Bandari Wari or the Pool of Nosari Bandari in the Bhugi River, on the south-east of the Nokrek Peaks of the Tura Range, is one of the most beautiful pools in the Achikland. It is surrounded on both banks by rock-cliffs.

An Achik legend maintains that the Nosari Bandari Wari was once the abode of two water-nymphs, respectively named Nosari and Bandari, who lived in friendly terms with the Achiks of the land of those days. Certain signs of their habitation are still visible by the pool.

THE TASEK POND

The Tasèk Pond in the *Akhing*-land of Village Naphak in the central part of Garo Hills is a wide and deep natural pond. It promises to develop into a wider inland lake in future.

An Achik legend says that the Tasèk Pond was formed through gradual sinking of the bed of land at the site and that, in course of time, the big black water-serpents, known as *sangknie*s, had come to abide in it.

THE KIMDE WARI

Kimdè Wari or the Pool of the *Kimdè* (*Mesua ferrea*), now incorporated within the Dambo Reserved Forest, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills is a natural pond of considerable antiquity. It was also known as Kimdègong Wari.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, in very ancient days, the Kimdè Wari was a very deep dark pool of water, reputed to be the home of huge black water-serpents, known as *sangknie*s, and that, having shifted themselves from their last homes at Rongro Rongkimjèng Chianchèng Dasrèng on the banks of the Ildek River, on the north of it, the lordly forebears of the once strong and warlike Rongmuthu *chatchi* (clan) had been settling by the sides of the Kimdè Wari and on the top of the Wèram Jambal Hill, a little west of it. Large *Kimdè* trees (*Mesua ferrea*) were then growing in abundance round about the Kimdè Wari.

GOUR

A number of ancient traditional accounts and legends still current amongst members of the Garo race adequately serves to show that Gour or Gaur, which is now in ruins, partly in West Bengal and partly in East Pakistan, was a Garo Kingdom; that the very name *Garo* really originated from the word *Gour* or *Gaur*, which means *Bison* or *the Wild Bull*, which was the natural symbol of the once mighty Gour Raj; that, after the destruction of the Gour Kingdom (in 1201 A.D.) by the Mussalmans, members of the ruling race of Gour were scattered in the hills and plains of Assam and Bengal and, as the conquering Mussalmans then often declared that they were ready to eat up the *Gour* (*Cow* or *Bull*), wherever found, many members of the ruling race of the

Gour Raj, fearing that they may really be "devoured" outright by the Mussalmans, had abstained from calling themselves *Gours*, *Gaurs* (Cows) or *Garos*, and cloaked themselves with assumed appellations. (*Gar* is a corrupted name of *Gour* or *Gaur*).

SAMBOL AHDING

Sambol Ahding or the Hillock of Sambol in the southern bank of modern Goalpara District, not far from Village Dakkait-dol, is a place of great historical interest to the Achiks.

An Achik traditional account maintains that Sambol Ahding was the Headquarters of the last Achik King, named Habra Usengpa, and that Habra Usengpa was treacherously murdered by the hired agents of Moghul invaders (in about 1499 A.D.).

OLA OLDING THEBRONG CHANGSIM

Old olding Thebrong Changsim is an ancient Achik name of the ancient Achik settlement on what is now known as Tukesware Hill in the southern bank of Goalpara District.

An Achik traditional account maintains that Ola Olding Olding Therbrong Changsim was the Headquarters of the Paramount Achik Sovereign, named, Raja Sirampa, and that the chief renowned leaders, who helped Raja Sirampa to rule over the Achiks then living in the areas of what are now artificially known as Garo Hills, Goalpara and Kamrup Districts, were known as Tou Basanpa, Siram Jamdappa, Koron Dal'gipa, Jap Phesappa, Jap Resappa, Kotta Nangrepa, Muga Dingchepea, Rakwa Nengjapa, Maran Dalgipa and Urja Rakgipa.

Ola Olding Thebrong Changsim and its neighbouring areas were also then known as Sambor Medikku, Chiga Bneng Bindeng and Phékro Danema.

AHSONG BENAGONG CHIGA BUDALONG

Ahsong Benagong Chiga Budalong Sahnepani Nokgil Benagongni Ja'dil is an ancient Achik settlement in what is now artificially known as Goalpara District. It is not far from a place now known as Rongjuli.

It is a sacred place as well as of historical interest to the Achiks.

AHSONG NENGABAD CHIGA NENGCHIBAD

Ahsong Nengabad Chiga Nengchibad, which is also known as Garomari Top lakhawa, is an ancient settlement of the Achiks on the left bank of the Songdu River. It is just close to modern Dalgoma on the Songdu River.

An ancient Achik traditional account maintains that, in the last great decisive battle at this place for three days and three nights between the combined warriors of Raja Bijni and Nokma Dhobani on the one hand and the Achik warriors on the other, the warriors of Raja Bijni and Nokma Dhobani were completely routed and both Nokma Dhobani and Raja Bijni were killed; that the Achiks were thenceforth left in complete undisputed possession of all the areas of land south of the Songdu River; that, on the outcome of this sanguinary battle, long afterwards when the British Government had drawn up the map of the Garo Hills District, the Achik leaders vehemently protested and refused to accept it, claiming that the Songdu (Brahmaputra) River should positively form the northern boundary of the officially recognized Achikland; that, notwithstanding, the Officials of the British Government, riddled too much with pro-Bijni influences as they had then been, had arbitrarily merged this part of the Achikland on the south bank of the Songdu within the map of the Estate of the Bijni Raj in Goalpara District.

AGAL JENGJILGRIM

Agal Jengjilgrim or Jengbari Duara is an ancient Achik settlement in the southern bank of what is now artificially known as Kamrup District.

An ancient Achik traditional account maintains that, in olden days, Agal Jengjilgrim or Jengbari Duara was ruled over by an Achik woman, belonging to Snal Bolonggre *chatchi* (clan) and a descendant of Rubadega of Songsugre; that the Achik women-ruler, voluntarily disowning her Achik origin, styled herself as Lokhi Rani and that the Achik settlement was later on renamed *Rani Gudam*.

GURENOK WATESA, RONGTOTRU SAMEGARU RANGSHA AGAL DILENG PATAL

Gurenok Watesa, Rongtotru Samegaru and Rangsha Agal Dileng Patal are the ancient Achik settlements in the southern bank of what is now artificially known as Kamrup District.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, while the Achiks were settling in Gurenok Watesa, Rongtotru Samegaru and Rangsha Agal Dileng Patal, they were greatly harassed by hordes of *Matcha Budubuda* or the *Matchadus* and that, therefore, the Achik leaders waged war on the *Matchadus*, completely defeated them and killed large numbers of them.

AHSONG NENGGITCHU CHIGA NENGCHIBING

Ahsong Nenggitchu Chiga Nengchibing, known also as Nokcholbari, is one of the most ancient Achik settlements at Kalibong in Bhutan. It is known also as Dhon Kuta.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that, while the Achiks were settling at Ahsong Nenggitchu Chiga Nengchibing, one Achik woman, named Dipari Mechik Nabari Tira, while washing her hairs and cleansing her feet at the Dhon Kuta Stream, was seen by Lord Mahadeb, the divine Lord of the mountains; that Lord Mahadeb or Shiva fell in love with her thereat and married her, with full divine ceremonies; that out of this divine marriage Dipari Mechik gave birth to two exceedingly beautiful daughters, respectively named Sikme and Donse; that the two sons of Sikme and Donse, respectively named Chusenpa and Chugapa, became the most heroic leaders of the Achiks, who are the descendants of Sikme and Donse, and that, in course of time, Dipari Mechik Nabari Tira, having been raised to the highest rank of divinity, has ever since been known by the divine name of *Parvati*.

The Achik legend further maintains that, leaving a stone statue of Dipari Mechik Nabari Tira in the channel of the Stream at Nokcholbari, the Achiks shifted themselves to Ahsong Patari Chiga Suunchi (the modern Cooch Behar).

The Achiks, in one of their old folksongs, still sing of this old settlement in Bhutan as follows :—

“*Ahsong Nenggitchu,*
Chiga Nengchibing,

*Ahsong a'mikkongjimjim,
Chiga re'ma gongdingding."*

That is,

*"'Tis the Country of Nenggitchu,
'Tis the Watering-Place of Nengchibing,
This is the Country, with its grand mountain slopes
in picturesque magnificence,
This is the Watering-Place, by the side of which
grow long slender-stemmed ratan-canes
in luxuriant exuberance."*

UDARE JAKBRI MEHGONGMA KOLATCHI

Udare Jakbri Mehongma Kolatchi is an ancient settlement of the Achiks in what is now artificially known as Rangpur District. At present the area of this ancient Achik settlement is called *Rangamati*. *Udare Jakbri* means the *Udare tree* (*Sterculia villosa*) with four leaves; and *Mehongma Kolatchi* means thirty clustered families of the *Mehong tree* (*Bauhinia variegata*).

An ancient Achik legend maintains that Udare Jakbri Mehongma Kolatchi was the third settlement of the Achiks since their arrival in India from Ahsong Tibotgiri, the first being at Nokcholbari and the second at Ahsong Patari Chiga Suunchi; that the Achiks brought to this settlement a division of the Kachari tribe as their slaves from Ahsong Patari Chiga Suunchi; that when people asked the slaves as to who they were, they replied, "*Ra' baha*," which means "*Have been brought*," and that the descendants of these slaves had ultimately come to be known as *Rabhas*, meaning *Those Who Have Been Brought*.

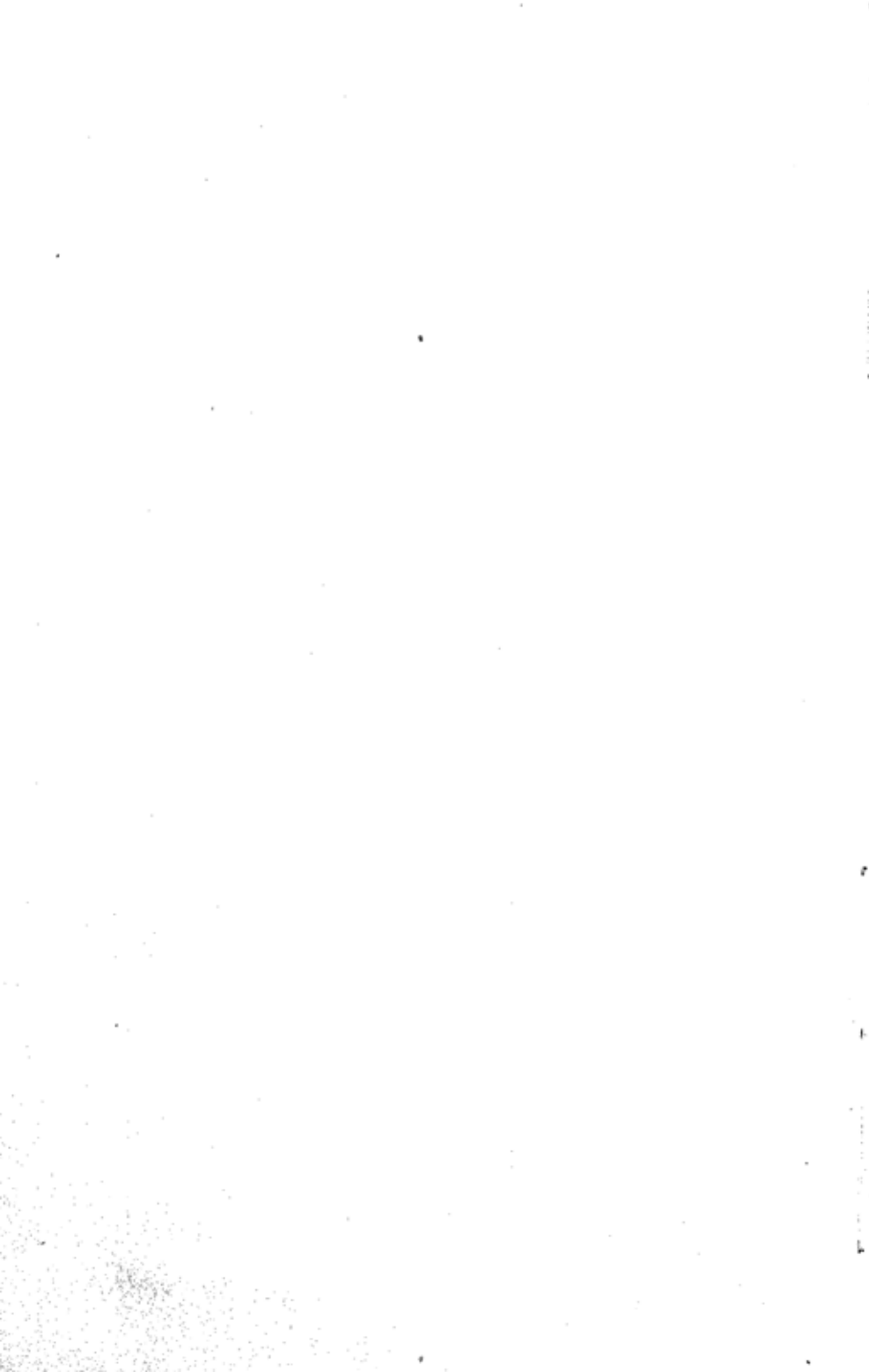
CHUCHONG

Chuchong is an ancient Achik settlement in the area which is at present known as Mymensingh District in East Bengal.

An ancient Achik legend maintains that in ancient days, an Achik chieftain, named Ushung, who married the only surviving granddaughter of Abong Noga Raja, founded the *Akhing-land* (hereditarily-held land) of Chuchong; that, in founding this Akhingland, Ushung received untold help from the stalwart warriors belonging to the Dawa, Mecheng, Rongmuthu and

Manda *chatchis* (clans); that after the death of Ushung, the *Akhing*-land was successively looked after by Rati, Jansing, Perae and Base and that afterwards, an alien adventurer-fugitive from distant Kanouj, wearing the garb of a religious mendicant and treacherously poisoning Base Raja to death, made himself the ruler of the *Akhing*-land and changed the name of Chuchong into Shusung.

(Available authentic records on Shusung attest that Somesware Patthak, after dispossessing Baisa Garo (i.e., Base Raja) made himself an independent ruler of Shusung, in 1280 A.D., and, in 1869 A.D., the British Government, on payment of one lakh and fifty thousand Gold Mohurs as Compensation, took, over the Hill-portions of the *Akhing*-land of Shusung from the then Ruler, then styled as "*Zeminder*." See *The Modern Indian History of Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zemindars*, etc. by L. N. Ghose) and *The Garo Hills Act XXII of 1869*.



NOTES

THE ACHIK SCRIPT (PAGES 1—2)

¹ *Mandalae*: Probably, the name of an ancient Garo country in Upper Burma. It may mean also the ancient Garo village which developed into the modern town, Mandalay.

² *The Arurongdi River*: The ancient Garo name for the Irrawady River in Burma.

³ *Ahsong Tibotgiri*: The ancient Garo name for the country of modern Tibet.

⁴ *Garwal Bri*: Literally, the Hill of Garwal. It is probably applied to the modern Garhwal Hills in the Himalayas.

SALARAM MITHDEICHAK (PAGE 3)

¹ *Salaram Mithdeichak*: Literally, the Divine Sanctuary of the East.

² *Phojou*: Literally, the Goddess of Prolificacy. This Goddess was later on called Kamakhya by the non-Garos when the temple fell into the hands of the non-Garos. Material evidence is not lacking that the first and original temple had been built by the Garos. (See Dr. Wade's *History of Assam*.)

³ *Lilasingh*: Probably, here the narrator means Rudrasingh. (See Sir E. A. Gait's *History of Assam*.)

⁴ *The Ajongs*: Generally, the non-Garo inhabitants of the plains are all called Ajongs by the Garos. Originally, the name was given to the special group of plains-dwellers of Garo origin in Mymensingh District in East Bengal. Literally, Ajong means "Worm of the Earth," and it is a word of contempt applied by the ancient Garo warriors and headhunters to the dwellers of the plains whom they looked upon as a people who knew nothing of warfare except to turn up earth by ploughing or hoeing just as the earthworms do. This is borne out by the fact of utter lack of ancient weapons of war, such as *milams* (two-edged swords), spears, etc., on the part of the "Ajongs" or "Hajongs" of the area of North Mymensingh District, East Bengal.

⁵ *Kamakhya*: The well-known place of worship at Gauhati, Assam. The Garos still claim, not without proven facts, that this Kamakhya Hill was an ancient Garo settlement; that they first made it a place of worship of their goddess Phojou, but that later on it had fallen into the hands of non-Garos and that the ancient stone carvings on the old original pathway leading up to it and in the precincts of the temples on the hill portray but the figures of Garo women. Wade's *History of Assam* serves to show that as late as the advent of the British rule in Assam the worshippers on the Kamakhya Hill were mostly Garo women.

DOMBI WARI (PAGES 4-7).

¹ *The Rongdik River* : The moderate-sized River which rises in the south-eastern side of the Meminram Peak of the Tura Range. It is a tributary of the Simsang River in Garo Hills.

² *Emangiri* : An area of akhing-land (hereditarily-held land) in the south of the eastern portion of the Tura Range in Garo Hills. It is also the name of the village within the akhing-land on the right bank of the Rongdik River.

RAJA ABONG NOGA AND HIS QUEEN (PAGES 8-10).

¹ *Achikland* : Literally, the Land of the Achiks (or the Garos). It is another name of Achik Ahsong, the Country of the Achiks, which is an area of land inhabited and owned by the Garos in ancient times, besides the artificially created District of Garo Hills, which forms but the mid-portion of the ancient Achikland. The major portion of Achik Ahsong, that was truly Achikland, had been arbitrarily and artificially incorporated by the British in the adjoining districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Khasia and Jaintia Hills, Sylhet, Mymensingh and Rangpur. The Songdu (Brahmaputra) River, at the lower stages, before joining the Ganges, was essentially a Garo River, flowing through the Achik Ahsong.

² *The Ahbengs, Matchis, Kotchus, Ahwes, Duals, Chisaks, Atongs, and Gara-Ganchings* : Some of the Divisions of the Garo race. These Divisions are still identifiable among the Garos in Garo Hills.

³ *Nokma Abong Chiren* : Literally, Abong, the Lord, the father of Chire. He is teknonymously known as Abong Chirepa.

⁴ *The Mrig Wari* : The famous deep pool in the Simsang River, in the akhing-land of Village Rongbinggiri, in the mid-eastern portion of Garo Hills.

⁵ *The Ildek River* : A river in the north-eastern part in Garo Hills. It is also called Deosila River.

⁶ *Machan house* : The type of house with raised platform or floor which is usually built in Garo fashion, as seen in the pucca tribal Garo villages in Garo Hills.

⁷ *The Mongre Hill* : A minor hill in the mid-eastern portion of Garo Hills.

⁸ *Rewak and Siju* : Areas of akhing-lands, with the villages bearing these names therein, in the south-eastern portion of Garo Hills.

⁹ *Emangiri* : An area of akhing-land and the village therein in due south of Village Rongbinggiri.

¹⁰ *Rongmagre and Dapsigre* : Areas of akhing-lands and

villages therein on the southern slopes of the eastern part of the Tura Range.

¹¹ *Badri* : Area of *Akhing*-land on the eastern spur of the Tura Range. *Badri* forms the basic name of several villages in the area.

¹² *Simsangiri* : An area of *akhing*-lands, collectively taken into account and the village therein in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills.

¹³ *Matchi* : A large area of land in the middle portion of Garo Hills, the inhabitants in which are known as Matchis. The area comprises the basin and the riparian areas of the middle and upper stages of the Simsang River in Garo Hills. The Matchis are renowned to be the most high-spirited, the most conservative and the most warlike division of the Garo race. They were the last of the Garos to submit to the British Rule in 1871 A. D.

¹⁴ *The Ahbengs* : A Division of the Garos who inhabit the western, north-western and south-western parts of Garo Hills.

¹⁵ *Darangre* : An area of *akhing*-lands and the villages bearing *Darang* as their basic-names, in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills. Geologically, this area is famous for its coal deposits.

¹⁶ *Sokmil cane* : A kind of long-stemmed cane, with fish-hook or cat-claw thorns in the bracts, the flower-stalks and tentacular tips of foils of leaves, commonly growing wild in the primitive forests of the Tura Range in Garo Hills. Its ripe fruits make very good eating and do not upset the stomach even though a hundred seeds are swallowed whole. Its matured stalks make most valuable and useful cane-stick. Its shoots make very delicious curry when properly cooked.

¹⁷ *Gara-Ganchings* : A division of the Garos who inhabit the riparian areas of the Dareng and the Rompa Rivers in the mid-south eastern part of Garo Hills.

¹⁸ *The Kotchus* : A division of the Garos who inhabit the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills, bordering the Khasia-Jaintia Hills. The Kotchus should not be confused with the Koch division of the Garos who inhabit the south-western part of Garo Hills.

¹⁹ *The Ahwes* : A division of the Garos who inhabit the mid-northern and north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²⁰ *Rongrong Dangkong* : An area of land on both banks of the lower stage of the Damring River, partly in Goalpara District and partly in Garo Hills.

²¹ *Sambol Adhing* : A little hillock, not far from the modern village of Dakkaitdol, in the Habraghat Pargana in Goalpara District. It is famous as the site of the Headquarters of Abrasen, an ancient Garo Chieftain. As the Garos have

no measure of time for days in the ancient Garoland, all knowledge of the date when Abrasen lived has been lost.

CHELA ASANPA AND BRARA (PAGE 19—31)

¹ *The Damring River* : A moderately-sized River in the mid-northern portion of Garo Hills. It flows into the Brahmaputra. It is also called Krishnai.

² *The land of Bijasik* : An area of *akhing*-land in the mid-northern portion of Garo Hills.

³ *The land of Bolmoram* : An area of *akhing*-land on the north-west of the Mongre Hill, with a village of the same name within it, in the mid-eastern portion of Garo Hills. Bolmoram means "the place where trees are shaken."

⁴ *Ganchi Village* : A village just a little above the confluence of the Norang and the Bhugi Rivers south-east of the Nokrek Peak of the Tura Range in the mid-southern portion of Garo Hills.

⁵ *The land of Waramgiri* : An area of *akhing*-land at a distance of twelve miles north of Tura.

⁶ *Bajengdoba* : A village, with a small market in it, in the northern portion in Garo Hills.

⁷ *Nongcharm* : An area of *akhing*-land, with a village of the same name within it, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills, bordering the Khasia Hills.

⁸ *Khongkal* : A village in the Habraghat Pargana in Goalpara District, close to the mid-northern part of Garo Hills.

⁹ *Susime* : The Goddess of Fortune in the Garo pantheon, represented by the Moon. By nature, she is a great temptress, fickle, changeable, envious, misleading. It is believed by the Garos that when she approaches a person, she never shows her back but recedes backwards on leave-taking and that no one has ever seen her back-side.

¹⁰ "*Ka Shangma, Ebang, Goera, Gualgija, Jajagija, Rakgipa, Gisilgipa, Wahsagipa, Ka Shangma Goera; Hei-wao* :"

These are the customary self-panegyric shouts of victory over a fallen enemy, as practiced by Garo warriors, meaning, "Shangma am I (by sept), Ebang (a mighty one) am I, Goera (God of Thunder and Lightning) am I (in virtue), Ever-Alert, Ever-Vigilant, Unerring, Never Out of Wits, Strong One, Steely am I." *Ka* is a word of abrupt self-introduction. *Shangma*, as a panegyric sept, is believed by the Garos to be the greatest in qualities of heart and heard, the noblest and the wisest of all living beings in the world since the beginning of time. *Hei-wao* is a mere shout of triumph.

It is a customary practice of a male Garo to shout himself out as *Shangma* in the event of incidentally meeting a royal tiger in

a pathway or jungle, even though he actually belongs to the Marak sept, in which case he usually shouts out: "*Ka Shangma Goera; Gualgija, Jajumangchi, Jakarechi, Goera gita, Pantora gita;*" meaning, "*Shangma Goera am I; Never-Erring, Never out of Presence of Mind, just like Goera, just like Pantora am I*" Pantora is a panegyric name of Gorera.

DELONG (PAGES 32—45)

¹ *Janggihini Nokgipa Jamani Biambi*: Literally, the Owner of Life, the Latent Source of Vital Human Principle. These are some of the attributive names of the Supreme Goddess in the Garo pantheon. In accordance to the nature of her functions, the Goddess is known to the Garos by more than one hundred sixty attributive names, which are used only by Garo officiating priests in various solemn ceremonies. To the Garos, the Goddess is the Natural Matrix, the Supreme Monad, of all Beginning, whose essence is process with retention of all connectedness and who, in her own essence, is, like Space-Time, devoid of all forms. The Garos believe that this Goddess imposes a common relationship in all that happens.

² *Kalkame Kalgra*: Literally, the Being whose Presence above oneself one always feels. The Invisible but Presence-Felt Guardian Spirit or Angel in the Garo pantheon, who is also called one's own Gosain, the god or daemon, who keeps watch at all times over one's person and life or the divinity who follows a person just as his or her shadow does. To have a glimpse of one's own Kalkame Kalgra: "On the first Sunday of a new Moon, go to a wide open place when the sky is perfectly clear at about 2 P.M., stand facing towards the East and, for five minutes, steadily and without winking your eyes, look at your own shadow in the middle of the neck, all the while uttering concentratedly, '*Chaya Purush Akarsonoe Swoho,*' and then, at once and without winking your eyes, look up directly over your head. You will then see a dim tiny figure high up in the sky. That dim tiny figure just directly over your head is your *Kalkame Kalgra* or your *Kalkambe*" So advised by one Garo priest once.

³ *Dikge*: A tuberous herb of medicinal value of the order of the ginger and turmeric (*curcuma longa*).

DARAN AND OPSORA (PAGES 46—53).

¹ *The Chibok*: Literally, the White Water. The name of a clear River in the central portion of Garo Hills. It flows through the *akhing-land* (hereditarily-held land) of Dingrang-Bawegiri. The ancient village of Bawegiri was on the left bank of the Chibok.

² *Meminram* : Literally, the Place of Ripening Paddy. A prominent peak of the Tura Range east of the Nokrek Peak.

³ *The Chibok Dare* : The Falls of the Chibok River, one of the most beautiful falls in the Garo Hills District. To fully appreciate the beauty and grandeur of the Falls one has to view the Falls from both above and below.

⁴ *Opsoras* : The Garos believe that *opsoras* or *mithdei-mechiks* (goddesses) are perfectly human in forms and features and dressed in snow-white clothes. They are reputed to be bewitchingly beautiful and capable of seducing young men by means of their charms. The Garos believe that the *opsoras* are fond of bathing in lonely crystal clear pools or lakes, especially on tops of high hills, during cloudless summer days. *Opsoras* are also believed by the Garos to be immortal beings.

⁵ *Pouries* : According to Garo belief, *pouries* are also immortal maids of exquisite beauty and everlasting youthfulness. They differ from *opsoras* in that the *opsoras*, besides being damsels of great human-like beauty and eternal youthfulness are wingless but clothed in flowing snow-white garments; while, the *pouries*, besides being human beings in form and features, but without human weaknesses and emotions, are endowed with wings. It is also believed that any man trying to satisfy his carnal desires either with *opsoras* or with *pouries* are speedily transformed permanently into beasts, such as wolves, bears, dogs, swines, etc.

MITHDEIBESA AND JINNEE (PAGES 54—60)

¹ *Jinnee* : According to Garo belief, Jinnees are immortal spirits who sometimes assumes the shapes of men of enormous sizes and gigantic statures and appear to human beings.

² *The Mongre Hill* : A hill, 2281 feet in height, in the mid-eastern portion of Garo Hills.

³ *Wahdona* or *Wahsala* : A Kinds of trap consisting of stout bamboo and wood which is in vague among the Garo *jhum* cultivators in Garo Hills. The trap is used to be set for wild pigs, deer and bears in jungles near *jhum* fields.

⁴ *The Dura Hill* : The ancient Garo name for the Tura Range in Garo Hills.

⁵ *The Chuma Mountains* : Literally, *Chuma*, means "Mother of Heights." *Chuma* is an ancient Garo name for the Himayalas.

SAORA SPORA AND THE MERMAID QUEEN (PAGES 67—70)

¹ *Ahsong Kamekhya Chiga Chironggi* : Literally, the Country of Kamekhya and the Watering-Place of Chironggi

(*Brachidanio rerio*)—the zebra fish. The land of Kamakhya, with the sacred place of worship on the Kamakhya Hill. According to the ancient Garo traditional accounts, the whole area of land, where modern Gauhati, Pandu, Amingaon, Jalukbari, Beltola are situated, formed an ancient settlement of the Garos.

Here the reference is made to that area of land.

² *Namikron* fruit : Literally, the Fish-Eye. The *Namikron* tree (*Pterospermum lanceaefolia*) that bears fruits resembling the eyes of fishes. Here it refers to its fruits.

³ The *Sangkries* : The Garos assert that there are enormous aquatic serpents, measuring from two hundred fifty to three hundred cubits in length in big rivers, pools and lakes; that big deep pools in large rivers owe their depth to the presence of these gigantic aquatic serpents; that big deep pools become silted up with sand, if such serpents desert them and that, on account of the fact that these gigantic aquatic serpents are very much afraid of Goera, the God of Thunder and Lightning, they are seldom seen above water. Such gigantic aquatic serpents are called *sangkries* in Garo.

⁴ *They performed all funeral rites over his clothes* : When a person is known or believed to be dead somewhere far from home and the body is not secured, it is the age-old customary practice among the Garos that the relations of the dead should perform needful funeral rites at home in his or her name over the clothes or other articles most used by the deceased while living.

⁵ *Umang so'a or Chugana* : *Umang so'a* literally means Burning Down of Ghost; *Chugana* literally means Ceremonial Festival of Rice-Beer (*Chu*) in the name of the dead. The Atongs and Gara-Ganchings, divisions of Garos in Garo Hills, call the same performance *Saram*. Such post-funeral ceremonial performance usually takes place in the house of death about a year or so after death. It lasts three days and three nights.

THE TWO DOVES AND THE TWO BROTHERS (PAGES 71—78)

¹ *The Ranggira Hill* : A hill, 2205 feet in height, on the north-west of Tura.

² *Gukuru-gitu-guk-gu-gu-gu* : The Garo fancy of the cooing of the wild doves.

³ *Tatara Rabuga, Stura Pantura, Dakgipa Rugipa, Suulgipa Imbanggipa, Janggini Nokgipa, Jamani Biambi* :

Tatara Rabuga is the real name of the Supreme Deity in the Garo pantheon, the rest being attributive names of the same. Literally, *Stura Pantura* mean "the Sole Knot and Cohesion of Existence," *Dakgipa Rugipa* mean "the Maker, the Moulder," *Suulgipa Imbanggipa* mean "the Fixer and Smoother of Ends or

Edges." Janggini Nokgipa mean "the Owner of Life" and Jamani Biambi mean "the Sole Latent Source of the Vital Human Principle."

⁴ *Beat tom-toms* : Whenever there occurs a feed of rice-beer, meat and cooked rice in a well-to-do Garo householder's house, it is customary to announce it by beat of drums at the house of feast. A *nagra* (large-sized tom-tom or drum) is always kept hanging by the back-door of the house for such purpose. Such a practice still survives among the Garos.

THE TWO YOUNG MEN AND THE AJAJU (PAGES 81—82)

¹ *Ajaju* : Literally, *Ajaju* means materialised Earth-Spirit. The narrator asserts that in olden days the *ajaju* was the terror of the forest to the Garos living in the little-explored woods in the Dura Hill in Garo Hills; that he secured some pieces of the *ajaju* for medicinal purposes from the bed of a river in the *akhing*-land of Rongkugiri, south of the Nokrek Peak, where a couple of *Ajajus* were killed some decades ago; that the body of an *ajaju* is chameleonic in appearance, with tall kneeless and of an *ajaju* is chameleonic in appearance, with tall kneeless legs, and that its long forked tongues are tractile and sharp and its head is like a human head.

THE CANNIBAL DEMON (PAGES 105—107)

¹ *Dambo-Rongjeng* : An area of *akhing*-land, with a village of the same name within it, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

² *Mehmang Gitting* : Literally, a natural demon or ghost as distinguished from a ghost of the dead.

THE GHOST'S LABOUR ON HIRE (PAGE 108—109).

¹ *The land of Naphak* : An area of *akhing*-land, with a village of the same name in it, in the mid-eastern portion of Garo Hills. Literally, *Naphak* means "Large and Wide-Eared."

MIJANGGI (PAGE 110)

¹ *Mijanggi* : Literally, the Vital Principle or Life-Current of Rice.

² *Minima Rokkime* : Literally, Rokkime, the Mother of Rice. *Rokkime* is probably the Garo name of *Lakshmi*, the Goddess of wealth of the Hindus.

³ *Ahkrita* : Literally, Ceremonial sacrificial offerings for land. In *Ahkrita*, sacrificial offerings of fowls, pigs, puppies and ducks are made, accompanied by chantings of sacrificial songs, at the temporarily erected altars on a particularly selected site in

the newly-burnt *jhum* field, once in the morning next to the day of burning of debris of *jhum* clearings and then during the weeding season usually in the month of May or June. At both times, sacrificial offerings, accompanied by chanting of sacrificial songs, are done first at the altar on the cultivation and then at the permanent altar at home. In the final stages of *Ahkrita*, much rice-beer is drawn and freely served out to all present and ritual dances are performed by the elderly male villagers, by turns, grasping *milam* and *spi* in their hands, shouting out self-eulogies to the accompaniment of rhythmic sounds of native musical instrument, in each tribal Garo house in Garo Hills.

⁴ *Chual Chonggal*: Literally, the long-tongued, gargantuan-pouched monster clad in light. A kind of malignant Lucifer in the Garo pantheon, visibly represented by the long continuous flaring flashing streak of light often seen in the sky at nights, as definitely distinguished from ordinary shooting stars. Such a streaked trail of light often seen in clear sky in nights is believed by the Garos to be manifested track of *Chual Chonggal*, which is known also as *Rakasi*. A ceremonial sacrificial performance, known as *Akgalga* or *Rakasi Krita*, is usually performed over earing paddy by the tribal Garos in Garo Hills against the monster.

ORIGIN OF NIGHTMARE (PAGE—111)

¹ *Grenang Dolwari*: The narrator cannot identify this country definitely. There is an area of *akhing*-land, known as *Dolwarigiri*, on the left bank of the Simsang River in the central part of Garo Hills; but he refuses to identify *Grenang Dolwari* with it.

² *Antiracha Ahkhanggitel*: Literally, the Sovereign Market, which is the Renowned Statelike Meeting Place. This refers to an ancient market believed to be existent on the Plateau of Balphakram in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills.

³ *Matchi Awek Dohreng Thangsek*: Literally, *Matchi Awek*, the Green Hawk.

⁴ *Koasi Minduri Hill*: A hill, 1806 feet in height, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁵ *Ahning Node Chining Bangje*: Literally, One who is called *Node* as a subterranean dweller and *Bangje* as an under-water denizen.

TURNING INTO ANIMALS (PAGES 112—114)

¹ *Jabirong*: Literally, the vital principle, the acorn of life, in man or animal.

² *Jachri*: Literally, the vital mobile, self-projecting, and self-acting seed of life.

The Garo adepts in sorcery and magic-lore firmly assert that the *jabirong* or *jachri* of a person can, by means of potent *Narsing Mantras*, be lured away from the body and made to enter into any living being, such as grasshopper, small land-lizard and the like, retained therein for any length of time at the sweet will of the practicer and that, by killing such a living being in a desired way, the same person can be also killed.

THE TUSKER AND THE PORCUPINE (PAGES 125—126)

¹ *Gypi Jongapa Wachingpa* : Literally, Gypi, the Father of Jonga (Burrower) and Waching, the Sharp Canine—Teethed.

A WAR AMONG THE GODS (PAGES 127-130).

¹ *Ahning Noresil Chining Kimresil* : Literally, One who is known as Noresil as the Subterranean region and as Kimresil as the denizen of underwater depths.

² *Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare* : Literally, One who is known as Bokjare as the dweller in the Subterranean region and as Dimjare as the denizen of the underwater world.

³ *Dontila Rongmikshera* : Literally Dontila, the Place of Chequered Stone-Carvings.

⁴ *Misi Rusime Kalsina Misi Asima Saljong Dingsima* : Literally, the Celestial Being, named Rusime Kalsina, who is known as Asima Dingsima as the son of Saljong, the Sun-Divinity.

⁵ *Ahkhim gaa* : According to the practice of *Ahkhim gaa*, a girl has to remain for one year in the house of the parents of her betrothed or newly-wedded before she goes back to her own parents' house, bringing with her husband. As a temporarily-grafted member of the family of her husband's parents, the girl has to do household chores in company of her sisters-in-law. This practice is according to matriarchism.

⁶ *Kichongrek Kichongbal Nahkechong Nahkesa Kichong-sil Kichongbak* : Literally, the Fishshaped, meticulously decorated, Richly bejewelled and exquisitely-serrated Comb of Rare Metal.

⁷ *Nokol Nosoksol Rori Nokhimchong* : Literally, One, who, as a Slave, is named Nosoksol and known as Nokhimchong as belonging to alien race.

⁸ *Ribo Ronggop Kni Jamdap* : Literally, One who is burdened with a stone-heavy load of hydrocele and whose netted hairs bob overhanging his body.

⁹ *My uncles and matrilineal brothers* : Her maternal uncles and maternal brothers, tracing their lines from the side of her motherhood, who are renowned leaders and famous warriors of the underwater world.

¹⁰ *Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokande* : Literally, One who is called Mahbitchi, the Mother-Goddess, as the Procreator of all those who dwell in the subterranean region, and known as Dokande as the Progenitress of all denizens of the watery depths.

¹¹ *Dohkupa Skodototong Sahnepa Mikrimiltong* : Literally, One, who is the Father of Dohku, with ugly rough-shaped bumpy head, and the Father of Sahne, with goggle eyes. This is the mythological name of the patriarchal head of the owls (*Athene Brama*).

¹² *Ahning Ditori Chining Gangdori* : Literally, One who is known as Ditori as a subterranean dweller and Gangdori as the denizen of the underwater world.

¹³ *Khorengpa Kobinpa Ganggipok Chidual* : Literally, the Gigantic White-Winged One, the Father of Khoreng and Khobin. This is the mythological name of the powerful white-winged, grey Fishing Hawk.

¹⁴ *Dakgipa Rugipa Mehgam Dakgipa Mande Rugipa* : Literally, One who is called Mehgam as the Maker and Mande (i.e., Achik or Garo) as the Moulder.

¹⁵ *Salgra Songdura* : Literally, the Salgra who is so called in relation to Songdu, the God, now represented by the Songdu (Brahmaputra) River.

¹⁶ *The Dilkhang Wari* : The deep pool of the Ildek (or Deosila) River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

¹⁷ *Marang Starang* : It is the manifested embodiment of Taboo, which betokens calamity, disaster, adversity and tragic misfortune, involving shedding of much blood and loss of life among living beings; the personification of anything savouring of unluckiness and fatefulness, resulting in pools of blood, in the affairs of living beings.

¹⁸ *Ahning Mahbitchi Chining Dokande Chipuchi Rodachi Thongmitchang Pantdrang* : Literally, The Water-Snake, the Striped, who is in full panoply of war, born of Mahbitchi, the mother of all living beings in the Subterranean Region, and of Dokande, the Progenitress of all denizens of the deep.

¹⁹ *The Gijang Bra Dilsing Gitel* : The confluence of the Lordly Dilsing and of the Gijang. The two rivers have their sources in Khasia and Jaintia Hills, join at Hahim and, flowing as one river through the south bank of Kamrup District, falls into the Brahmaputra.

²⁰ *Dakgipa Tatara Rugipa Stura Pantura Suulgipa Imbang-gipa* : Literally, the Creator, who is Tatara, the most worshiped, Rugipa, the Moulder, who is Cohesive and Binding of all existence, the Setter of Limits, the Fixer of Ends or Edges. These are some of the attributive names of the Supreme Divinity in the Garo pantheon.

DURAMA IMBAMA (PAGES 131-132).

¹ *Durama Imbama* : Literally, the Mother of Dura, the Grand and Majestic, and the Mother of Imba, the profoundly Potent. The tutelary Goddess of the Achikland in the Garo pantheon, who is represented by the Dura Hills in Garo Hills. *Tura* is a distorted name of *Dura*.

² *Koasi Minduri* : Literally, the Shadowy High-Crested One. As a Goddess in the Garo pantheon, She is represented by the Koasi Hill in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

³ *Ahratcha Rongbare* : Literally, the Lordly Stone-Walled Land. As a Goddess, she is represented by a hill, known as Ahratcha Rongbare, the highest peak of which is 2562 feet high, and the northern end of which looks like a long wall of rocks.

⁴ *Abet Rengge* : Name of a malicious god of fountains and rills in the Garo pantheon. He is called also *Abet Rora Rakka Ganda* by the Matchi division and *Ahsi* by the Atong division of the Garos. Sacrificial offerings, known as *Bisik Krita* by the Chisak and Ahwe divisions, *Chidema* by the Matchi division and *Ahsioka* by the Atong division of the Garos have to be offered to him.

⁵ *Misi Nokgitcham Ahnang Adilkhang Tematchi Ponggro* : Literally, the deserted homestead of the celestial divinity, the habitat of Ahnang and Adilkhang by the Pool of Tematchi Ponggro. So said of the area of land and a deep pool in the Ildek River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁶ *Simsang Rikam Rongdong Bra* : Literally, The bank of the Simsang River where the Rongdong River downs its waters.

⁷ *Okbongjada Wakewanel* : Literally, the Stupid Fat-Bellied One with sharp crooked Teeth.

⁸ *Songdu* : Refers to the female aspect of a benign divinity represented by the Songdu (Brahmaputra) River.

⁹ *Ahning Dimjare Nore Chire* : The Chthonic Goddess of Rain in the Garo pantheon.

¹⁰ *Nagni* : The Snake Divinity in the Garo pantheon, whose servant, named *Surengreng*, a serpent of immense length, is reputed to be endowed with powers to pierce the impregnable rocks.

¹¹ *Tengaja* : Name of a divinity in the Garo pantheon who rules over elves and faeries, at whose touch the strong adamantine rocks are believed to become as brittle as mushrooms.

¹² *Buga Radèpa* : Literally, Buga, the Father of Radè, the spouse of Mermaid Queen of the underwater world.

¹³ *Nahnil Singsèpa* : Literally, Nahnil, the Father of Singsè. The patriarchal head of the electric eels.

¹⁴ *Simbu Racha Kharu Nokma* : Literally, Simbu the

Brave, Kharu the Lord. The patriarchal head of the enormous water-serpents, known as *sangknie*s, and of the pythons.

THE SONG OF THE SWINE (PAGES 136-137).

¹ *The Song* : Among the Garos, there are different kinds of folksongs, such as *Khore Doka*, *Gogaè Ring'a*, *Dani Ring'a*, *Damè Ring'a*, *Rada Ring'a*, *Chèrasota*, *Gonda Doka*, *Khatta Agana*, *Ajèa* or *Ahbèng Balsala*, *Doroa*, *Ahoma*, *Arara* or *Rèrèkal'a*, *Mangtata* or *Grapa*, *Saling Ring'a*, *Aèmarong Krita*, *Sèrèjing*, etc.

As a class by itself, this Song of the Swine is *Rada Ring'a*, which is always Solo.

² *Huk bandoa* : The sound fancied to have been emitted by a swine when in a pleasurable state.

SOME GEMS FROM THE ACHIK LORE (PAGES 141-149)

¹ *The god Raka Ganda Abet Rora* : In the Garo pantheon, Raka Ganda Abet Rora is the god of fountains, springs and rills, who causes high fevers or emaciating illnesses to offenders or intruders upon his habitat and thus brings about their death, unless otherwise he is propitiated through solemn offerings of needful sacrifices at altars specially erected for the purpose.

² *Dingipa Bahbra* : *Dingipa* (pronounced Din-gipa) literally means *One Who Brings and Bestows upon* and *Bahbra* literally means *One who Tends, Preserves and Keeps in Safety*. Attributive names of the Supreme Goddess in the Garo pantheon, who, according to her different functions in the execution of the universal scheme of things, is known to the Garos by more than one hundred sixty attributive and non-attributive names.

³ *Abet* : Name of an ancient patriarch and a simpleton amongst the Garos. He is absolutely foolish in the ways of men. He simply does not know how to do things. In the saying here, reference is made to the following well-known folk story :-

"Abet cleared a plot of jungle for *jhum* cultivation at place, named Ahnamgija Ronggagija in Dikgil Ahsong. He burnt down the debris of the clearing. It was a very hot day when his mother-in-law came to the cultivation. There was no shelter there. So, she rebuked him saying, 'Abet, why do you not set up a cadjan on the cultivation, even just as small as the shell of a crab?'"

Abet was unable to comprehend its meaning. It was just a metaphorical similitude in the locality for erecting a small shanty in the *Jhum* cultivation. So, he brought a real crab-shell the next day and put it up in a leaning horizontal fashion on the cultivation and told her in the evening that a cadjan house has just been set up on the cultivation just as she desired. Next morning, when his mother-in-law came to the cultivation, a dog followed her, and running ahead of her, devoured the crab-shell."

⁴ *Thengthe Bandok Mikphil Jahphil* : In the Garo pantheon, Thengthe Bandok Mikhil Jahphil is the King of Elfs, on whom the goddess of wealth bestowed the key to riches and wealth.

GOERA, THE GOD OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING (PAGES 152—184)

¹ *Ohom* : Literally, uneven, peerless, matchless. It refers to the country chequered with plains, hills, green meadows, deep primitive forests, impenetrable dense mixed jungles and jutting rocks, interspersed with rivers, streams, rills and small lakes, that is, the area of land comprising the artificially created modern provinces of Assam, West Bengal and East Bengal.

² *Ahsong Nonoe* : Literally, the Country of Nonoe, the Heroic Land Where Women Rule.

³ *Ahphiljangsha* : Literally, the Famous Ancient mountain-land.

⁴ *Nengkuchot* : Literally the Grand end or Tip of Neng. The Source of the Songdu (Brahmaputra) River.

⁵ *Ahsong Tibotgiri* : The ascient Garo name for modern Tibet.

⁶ *Balphakram Hill* : The famous Plateau, 2808 feet high, with its ageless scenic beauty, on the south-eastern part of the artificially created Garo Hills District. It is a mass of limestone rock with a thin layer of soil, on which only short grass and few small trees grow.

⁷ *Achik Ahsong* : Literally, the Country of the Achik. Here, by the "*Achik Ahsong*," it does not mean only the arbitrarily and artificially created modern District of Garo Hills in Assam; but all the hills and plains of the area of land, where the heroic ancestors of the Achik or Mande race lived and held undisputed sway long before the rise of the Moghul Power in India and which comprised the areas now artificially known as Assam, West Bengal and East Bengal. According to ancient Garo traditional accounts, the ancient kingdom of Gour or Gaur, now in ruins in Bengal, is the true Achik Ahsong of old and the Garos (*Achiks* or *Mandes*) are but a fragmentary race of the once corporate member of the once mighty kingdom of Gour or Gaur, destroyed in 1201 A. D. by the Muslim invaders under Muhammad Bakthyar.

⁸ *The Songdu River* : The Garo name for the Brahmaputra.

⁹ *Gore Bri Ora Ahding Dipblokni Guare* : Literally the Hill of Gore, the Hillock of *Ora* tree (*Phyllanthus Emplica*), the Fortress of the Frogs. Name of an ancient market said to be existent on the Balphakram Plateau.

¹⁰ *Misi Ahrakpa Saljong Gingmatpa* : Literally, The Father of Ahrak, as a Celestial Being and the Father of Gingmat, the Coxcomb, as related to the Sun-Divinity. "Ahrakpa" means Father of the "Hardener of the Earth."

¹¹ *Kabu Renche Norimbi Dikkimbi* : Literally, Kabu Renche, the strong Large-Headed Woman.

¹² *Dumerong Ducherong Ahning Gring Wana Chining Gring Waja* : Literally, Dumerong Ducherong, the Sleek-Bodied, who, as a Subterranean Being, is known as Wana, and Waja as a Being of the Underwater World.

¹³ *Misini Jakrimra Saljongni Redokra* : Literally, the Place where the Celestial Divinity used to handle hand-supports and where the Sun-Divinity used to alight by means of a dangling long stem of rattan, set as a lift-handle.

¹⁴ *Misi Chipimpa Ahning Jogo Racha Chining Sambal Gitel* : Literally, Celestial Being, the Father of Chipim, who is named Jogo the Brave, as a Subterranean Being, and Sambal the Lord, as a Being of the Underwater World.

¹⁵ *Nodoe Notakki Balongre Balongjap* : Literally, the Sister-Spouse Life's Indivisible Other-Entity.

¹⁶ *Bisikkrom Bidhotare* : Literally, the Changeless Source, the Central Core, the Matrix of all Beginning. In the Garo pantheon, the Supreme Goddess, the Cosmic Mother Divine, who is beyond the creative, the preservative and the destructive influences. According to the Garo story of creation this Goddess created materials out of which the Goddess Nosthu Nophanthu (literally, the Tie-Knot of All) and Misi Sisthe (literally, the Cohesive Principle of All), at her command, fashioned the Earth.

¹⁷ *Rome Roshe* : Literally, *Roshe* means Purifier and *Rome* means the Dehydrating Separator of the Pure from the Impure and the Mixed.

¹⁸ *Chushe Dangshe* : Literally, the Cleanser of the Interior through skillful manipulation.

¹⁹ *Ahsong Ahbugrang Chiaashelgrang Ahtutru Chamegaru Misini Nokgitcham Saljongni Kihgongdam* : Literally, the Country of Ahbugrang, the Hollow-Land, the Watering-Place of Ahahelgrang, the Porous Land, the Land Ahtutru Chamegaru, the deserted Home-stead of the Celestial Divinity and the Garbage-Heap of the Sun-Divinity.

²⁰ *Bindeng Salaram* : Literally, Bindeng by the East.

²¹ *Shohlyng Ranggitdu* : Literally, Shohlyng, the boiling Gong.

²² *Mao Gypeng Rongma Khueng* : Literally, the Place where the *Mao* tree (*Hibiscus Macrophyllus*) grows with its trunk athwart the broken-edged Rock.

²³ The *Nokphanthe* : Literally, the Bachelors' House. In every Garo village there is a number of *Nokphanthes*, in accordance to the proportionate number of unmarried young men, and widowers in the village. In a Garo village, there must be a *Nokphanthe*. Unmarried young men and widowers of a village live, sleep and have their meals in the Village *Nokphanthe*. The meals are prepared in the houses of the maternal relatives of the

inmates of the *Nokphanthe* and are placed by the sisters and nieces of the inmates on hanging wicker-baskets, known as *kaldes* which, when full, is drawn up and emptied out by the inmates in the *Nokphanthe*, who dine together on the open porch of the *Nokphanthe* as brothers of one family. This laudable institution of *Nokphanthe* is still seen at its best at present at villages Emungiri and Siju in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills.

II

¹ *Chikhasindik Chimerongdik Maadini Bisik Sepruni Rongdik* : Literally, the Place of round deep pool of cool water, the Source of the Maadi Stream, the Bin of the Limpet.

² *Rokman Meh-a* : Literally, Rokman, the Male.

³ *Chengman Phante* : Literally, Chengman, the Bachelor.

⁴ *Ahning Doe Nagarak Chining Doe Nagaja* : Literally, Doe Nagarak the Subterranean Dweller, who is named Doe Nagaja, as a denizen of the Underwater World.

⁵ *Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding* : Literally, the Hill of Dimbil (*Carea arborea*) and the Hillock of Phalwang (*Dalbergia stipulacea*). Name of ancient market-place famous in the folklore of the Garos for its importance and antiquity. It is in the modern *akhing-land* of Village Baringgiri in north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁶ *The Dura Hill* : The ancient Garo name for the Tura Range in Garo Hills.

⁷ *Khorengpa Khobinpa Ganggipok Chidual* : Literally, the White-Winged Rapacious One, the Father of Khoreng and Khobin. Name of the patriarchal head of all hawks, the heftiest and the most favourite warrior and progeny of the Sun-Divinity, now represented by the whitish-grey winged fishing hawk, known as *Kongklong* or *Ramgong*.

⁸ *Chongmitchang Pantdrang Chipuch Rodachi* : Literally, the zebra-watersnake, the long, mighty warrior. The patriarchal head of the *kharait* family.

⁹ *Gonga Tritpa Raksanpa* : Literally, Gonga, the Father of Trit and Raksan.

¹⁰ *Susime* : The Garo Goddess of Fortune represented by the ever-changing Moon.

¹¹ *Munepa Takko Shanepa Mallo* : Literally, one known as Takko, as the Father of Mune, and as Mallo, as the Father of Sahne.

¹² *Doh-a Ahning Ruram Sureng* : Literally, the Bird of the Subterranean World, known as Ruram Sureng.

¹³ *Wakmabitchi Wakkimbi* : Literally, the Primordial Head of the Strong-Teethed Swine Family.

III

¹ *Tompa Okpet Dina Khahpet* : Literally, Okpet, the Stern-Somached, Self-willed ; the Self-Concentrated Dina, the fearless Stout-Hearted Mischief-Monger.

² *Sume Dilme Seksho Mahbitchi Doro Dohkandi Okgitduma Bolkaruma* : Literally, Sume, the Endless Vital-Current, Seksho the Prolific Primordial Mother of the Myriad, named Doro Dohkandi the Mother of Okgitdu, the Steely-Bellied, and of Bolkaru, the Stiff-Skinned.

³ *Noonggi Noongjap Illinggi Illinggap* : Literally, the Massive-Sized Active Female, the Ever-Keen and Fleet.

Songduni Angkerong Sagalni Damchong : Literally, the Giant Crab of the Songdu (Bramaputra), which is the Terror of the Sea.

⁵ *Makkapa and Doh-otdu* : Literally, the Father of Makka the Common Brown Monkey, and Doh-otdu, the Water-Wolf.

⁶ *Gringjeng and Abaljeng* : Literally, the Vigilant and the Watchful Ward to whom the mysteries of creation are open.

⁷ *Rangbildi Rangbilda* : An area of land partly in North Khasia and Jaintia Hills and partly in South Kamrup, not far from the Landu Hill.

⁸ *Ahning Gring Wana Chining Gring Wacha* : Literally, the Spacious Underground Area, the Den of the Mother-Tooth and the Spacious Underwater world, the Place of Cutting of Teeth.

⁹ *Ashong Nongrengreng Chiga Nengchibing* : Literally, the country of Nongrengreng and the Watering-Place of Nengchibing.

¹⁰ *Mehgam Nongshobal Dykgyl Shalbri* : Literally, the land of Nongshobal of the Mehgam division of the Achiks, and the land of Shalbri, the land of the Dykgyl division of the Achiks. This land is in the mid-western part of modern Khasia and Jaintia Hills in Assam. This land is believed by the Garos to be the abode of the immortal Garo Vulcan, the moulder of armours for warrior divinities.

IV

¹ *Kamal Aepa Mande Ajepa* : Literally, as a Kamal (Blacksmith), known as Aepa, the Father of Ae, and, as a Mande (Achik or Garo), known as Ajepa, the Father of Aje. He is also known as Theara Matchallang.

² *The tehrot vine* : A well-known stout wild creeper common in the primitive forests in Garo Hills. Its fruits are harmless and are sometimes eaten by men.

³ *Kasim* : Known also as *pasim* (*Paederia foetida*). A

small creeper common in the dense mixed jungles in Garo Hills. Its fruits are as small as the fruits of the *khitma* tree (*Rhus semialata*) and are used by the Garos to blacken teeth and to prevent tooth decay. Its leaves are used as leafy vegetable. It is of medicinal value.

⁴ *Wahmisina sacrifice* : In order to perform *Wahmisina* sacrifice, a bamboo-pole, about a cubit and a half long, is splintered into two in the form of a tweezers and painted by means of shoot and is kept clasping a root of the tree blighted by lightning. It serves as an altar. The officiating priest chants out sacrificial songs, holding a chicken by the wings, at the newly-prepared altar. The chicken is then killed and its blood is sprinkled on the bamboo-pole and at the root of the tree. After its entrails are offered at the altar and its feathers are stuck with blood to the altar, the chicken is roasted and eaten with cooked rice by the priest on the spot.

When youngsters are afflicted with ulcers on the heads, the ulcers are imputed to have been caused by the youngsters' coming in contact with the tree struck by lightning. This sacrifice is performed for the purpose of curing such ulcers as well as to prevent life and property in the vicinity from being hit by lightning.

⁵ *Ahkhuaasi Ahbolgro* : Literally, a Long narrow strip of Land with yawning chasms on both sides.

⁶ *Ahkhuaasi Rongpakdare* : Literally, a Long narrow strip of Land, surrounded with massive wall-like rocks on either side.

⁷ *Warigitchak Chigandrak* : Literally, the Crimson Pool of Water, the Home of the *Gandraks* (Speckled Clear-Water Edible Frogs). According to figurative sacred songs, known as *Doroas*, of the Garos, the home-coming of Goera and Sajepa Monggolpa Toajeng Abiljeng is an allegory on the advent of rain and thundersqualls is Spring.

V

¹ *Ahnima Gruram Chinima Rangsitram* : Literally, the mighty Avalanches of Land and of Vast Spouts of Water.

² *Songdu Bisik Matpa Achik* : Literally, the Source of Songdu (Brahmaputra) and the Mountainland of Matpa. It means the North-Eastern Himalayan Regions.

³ *Nokrek, Medan, Khilbolma, Methongbol, Jadisil, Gonggrot, Gawakma Gawe, Ramchengga and Nengru Ahphal* : Local names of Hills, Pools, Streams, Valleys, Plains in the areas which are artificially known now as Districts of Garo Hills, Goalpara and Mymensingh.

⁴ *Mahadeo, Chandodengga, Balphakram and Chikhusu* :

Local names of Streams, Hills and Plateau in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills and in the South-western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

⁵ *Aghuare Rongpakmare Shohlyng Janthikol* : Literally, Land Fortified by Massive Walls of Rocks and watered by Shohlyng through subterranean conduit.

Shohlyng is a small stream in the south-western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills, bordering Garo Hills.

⁶ *Bil Goera Jakbal Nisi Chela Rongdot Jakthong Manggot* : Literally, Goera, the Great Strength, the Destroying Hand, the Heart of Flint-Rock, the Firm steely Bludgeoning Arm.

⁷ *Jugi Phante* : In the Garo pantheon, Jugi is the benign divinity, who rules lesser spirits of healing elements.

⁸ *Goerani Nokphante Diplokni Guare* : Literally, the Bachelor-House of Goera, the Fortress of the Frogs.

⁹ *Rongnokma Rongjamdap* : Literally, the Stately Cadjan-Shaped Rock of immense dimensions.

¹⁰ *Jahphangma Khingwangma* : The matrilineal head of the Ahbeng division of the Garos, inhabiting the western, north-western and south-western parts of Garo Hills.

¹¹ *Nokkima Jamkima* : The matrilineal head of the Matjangchi division of the Garos, who inhabit the north-central portions of Garo Hills.

¹² *Gara* : The division of the Garos inhabiting the riparian areas of the Rompa and Rongdik Rivers south of the eastern extremity of the Tura Range in Garo Hills.

¹³ *Ganching* : The division of the Garos inhabiting the riparian areas of the Dareng (Nitai) River directly south of the Meminram Peak of the Tura Range in Garo Hills.

¹⁴ *Chisak* : The division of the Garos inhabiting the mid-north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

¹⁵ *Matchi* : The division of the Garos inhabiting the riparian areas of the middle and upper stages of the Simsang River and its tributaries, immediately north of the Nokrek and Meminram Peaks of the Tura Range, in Garo Hills. The Matchis proved themselves to be the most troublesome of all the Garos to the British on the advent of the British rule in the hills. They were the last of the independent-loving Garos to most unwillingly submit themselves to the British rule in 1871 A.D.

¹⁶ *Dual* : The division of the Garos, at present found mostly in the Garo country, as recognized so by the British, in North Mymensingh District in East Bengal.

¹⁷ *Mehgam Nongal* : The Mehgam division of the Garos, inhabiting the north-eastern part of Garo Hills and the whole of the western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills. They are called Lyngams by the Khasis. They are distinctly purely Achiks or Mandes, being divided into clans as are the Achiks or Mandes in Garo Hills. For instance, the Rengcheng or Nongthloh clan

among the Mehgams is as same as the Chambugong clan among the Mandes in Garo Hills, the Nongshobar clan among the Mehgams is as same as the Gahre or Gagra clan among the Mandes in Garo Hills, the Nongoshur clan among the Mehgams is as same as the Tehgitdi clan among the Mandes in Garo Hills, the Nongbreit clan among the Mehgams is as same as the Rongmuthu clan among the Mandes in Garo Hills, and so on.

¹⁸ *Dykgyl Kamal* : Literally, Dykgyl the Blacksmith. The Dykgyl division of the Garos inhabiting the mid-northwestern part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills. In ancient days, they were the most famous blacksmiths and priests.

¹⁹ *Baringgre and Pakregre* : Areas of *akhing*-lands, with villages, bearing the same names, within them, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²⁰ *Dawa, Dohbu* : Areas of *akhing* lands, with villages within them, having the same names, in the mid-north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²¹ *Shohlyng Janthikhol* : A small stream in the south-western part of Khasi Hills, bordering Garo Hills. Not far from the Mohekholla River, which forms the boundary line between Garo Hills and Khasia Hills, is a famous place by the stream, known "*Shohlyng Wakso*." The Garos believe that the entrails of the monster-boar were cleansed for cooking at this place; that at the springs at this place the cleansing of entrails of the monster-boar still enacts and, because filth and excrements discharged from the entrails, the bad-smelling, just as that of filth and excrement of entrails of pigs, still persists here.

VI

¹ *Mehjakchi Kahsyndik* : Literally, Mehjakchi, the Silent Cold.

² *Bugarik Bugasil* : Name of water-wigth, which is believed by the Garos to possess supernatural powers.

³ *Noeri Simeri Jahpramma* : Literally, Noeri Simeri, the Mother of Jahpram. In the Garo pantheon, she is the malignant goddess, who causes all rheumatic pains, such as lumbago, gout, sciatica, arthritis, etc.

⁴ *Maadi Rongkuchi* : The Mass of Rock, which forms the watershed of the Mahadeo River in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills. *Rongkuchi* literally means *the Rock out of which frothy water issues*.

⁵ *Suuri Wakma Sinchikchikma* : Literally, the Monster-Hog of Snow, the Mother of Biting Cold, the Hoar-Headed Frost-Mother.

VII

¹ *Ahning Rimit Chining Chimit Doldol Tira* : Literally Doldol the Female, who, as a subterranean being, is called Rimit, and named Chimit as a denizen of the Underwater World.

² *Marakma Makalma Kohmama Gale Rengshe* : The heroic being who first assumed the panegyric sept of Marak since the beginning of clanship among the Garos.

³ *Shangmama Ranjama* : The heroic being who first adopted the panegyric name of Shangma since the origin of clanship among the Garos.

⁴ *Mangshang Ahsong* : The Country of Mangshang in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills, bordering the Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

⁵ *Doro Ahkuchot Rado Chubanda* : Literally, the Tip of the Land of Doro and the Abrupt End of the Land of Rado.

⁶ *Ahdokgre* : Literally, the Place where the Earth is Struck. An area of land, with a village bearing the same name within it, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁷ *Bolmoram* : Literally, the Place where Trees are shaken. An area of *akhing* land, with a village with the same name, within it in the mid-north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁸ *Dohkru Miwepa Ahsim Chiwepa* : Literally, the Dove, the Father of Miwe, the Paddy-Picker, and the Drawer of Water off the Salt-Lick.

⁹ *Bisibol Bijongbol* : Literally, the Tree of Poison, which is the Living Tree of Venom.

¹⁰ *An Achik really jeopardises his life* : It is said that, as Marak is his ancient enemy, any tiger wants to get on even or settle accounts with a Marak and that, therefore, the tiger any time primes for any person calling himself Marak. It is also stated by the narrator that, as since the very beginning of time no Garo ancestor, calling himself Momin, has ever achieved an act of bravery nor displayed deeds evidently savouring of physical or moral courage nor has he ever braved the dangers of the forests, nor has he ever distinguished himself in any crisis which calls for physical courage, alertness, strength and endurance, the tiger has not the slightest feeling of respect for any person who calls himself Momin.

VIII

¹ *Ahkhang Batmara* : Literally, the Market of Batmara.

² *Kimma Dohda* : Literally, the Place of Dohda, where a large number of people assemble for purposes of exchanging, buying and selling.

³ *Balimit* : Literally, Enchantingly beautiful Land.

⁴ *Banbae* : Literally, Wonderfully Charming Streams, the waters of which criss-cross in spate.

⁵ *Innang Phalkhang Norang Jipjang* : Literally, Innang the Flirtuous and Norang the Ever-Moving Female.

⁷ *Mangra Anhi Mehmang Nikgil* : Literally, the Market of Mangra, the Rendezvous of Ghosts. It is believed by the Garos that this market was usually held at night at a place near the Plateau of Balphakram in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills in very, very ancient days and that sometimes even the roving vital human principle of human beings, while asleep, were wont to join thereat.

⁸ *Ahning Komma Raja Chining Komma Racha* : Literally, as a dweller of the subterranean region, known as Komma as King and named Komma, and Dauntless, as a denizen of the Underwater World.

⁹ *Saljongpatra Rongdohgachol* : Literally, the Gateway of Rocks, the Door-Bolt of the Sun-Divinity.

¹⁰ *Bone Nirepa Jane Nitepa* : Literally, known as Bone the Father of Nire and as Jane as the Father of Nite.

¹¹ *Ranggi Rangwal Ahding Mao Gypeng, Chiring* : Literally, the heavenly Hillock of Rangwal by the Streams of Mao Gypeng, across which bend the Mao tree (*Hibiscus Mar-cophyllus*).

¹² *Rangdi Agal* : Literally, the Grassy Plain of Rangdi. A grassy plateau in the south-western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

¹³ *Rongguare Rongpakdare Balwa Gitokram Ahning Jajokram Songdu Guuri Dinram Misi Sahra Roram* : Literally, the Fortress-Like Rock, where the Wind-Divinity is wont to pass across, where an Underground Pathway traverses, where the immense masses of Fog used to inundate rolling down from the Songdu (Brahmaputra) River and where the Celestial Divinity used to have pleasure walks.

¹⁴ *The porcupines cannot be poisoned to death* : This is the age-long belief of the Garos worth verifying by science.

IX

¹ *Grangre Rangkildi* : the Garo name of an ancient famous place in the south-western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

² *Chikhasin Chijrim* : Literally, the Silent Deep Pool of Water.

³ *Mebit Mebang* : Literally, the Paddy hidden underground,

which issues out by itself. It is believed by the Garos that the vital principle of Rice sought shelter by itself in the Underground Recesses during conflagration caused by Goera and that it issues out only at nights for bits of fresh air.

⁴ *To the Achiks Goera is the Immortal and Invincible God of Thunder and Lightning*: To the primitive Garos since time immemorial past, Goera is the God of Health and Strength, the very Personification of that Latent Invisible All-Powerful Energy, which is known as *Electricity* in modern Science.

The recently tapped atomic and nuclear powers are but manifestations of some of the powers of Goera of the Achiks.

X

¹ *Ahsokme Ahjaphang, Balwa Gitokram, Guuri Jajokram, Dohreng Bawanggiram, Silchi Nokphanteram, Khatchi Gitokram, Jugi Melaram, Ahkhuasi Jahpa Cholsi*: Literally, the Breast-Foundation of the Earth, the Slender Sole of the Earth, where the Wind-Divinity used to Pass through, where Fog used to wisp by, where broad-winged kites used to spread their wings in regal circling sweeps in dizzy heights, where the Spirit Silchi used to resort, where the Spirit Khatchi used to ride by and where the Spirit Jugi used to hold his Councils.

² *Kharu Chimongram Rongma Dandakram*: Literally, Where Massive Drift-Wood used to Pile up, where huge stones used to be rolled up into Heaps.

³ *The Chitmong or Weamong Hill*: Literally, the Body of Chit or the Great Deity. Waamong is the Atong name of the same Hill. *Chit* means *one who* tears, and *Chitmong* means the silent manifested Body of the Loud Blast that tears the Skies. The most prominent Hill, 3365 feet high, in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills. This Hill is commonly known to the Garos as "*Chitmong Tingring Rema Bangjang*," which means "*the Stately-Poised Chitmong Decked with Green Plumage of Long Slender-Stemmed Rema (rattan)*."

THE TIGER'S DIVINATION (PAGE 185-187)

¹ *Translated, the verse runs:—*

"Cover me, ye leaves of grass and bambooes,
Bend over me, thou, bulrush plant,
Thou, jagged rock, barricade me from view.
Thou, bending clump of *phool* grass, cover me,
Thou *samsmari* (*Eupatorium cannabinum*),
overshadow me.

Ye, branches of grass, leaves of *cochu*
(*colocasia indica*), leaves of trees,
Camouflage me in silence, stir ye not."

² *Freely translated, the verse runs :—*

“Deng, Dengga, Come, thou, hither,
As hast thou been predestined for me
By Salgra and Bahbra of long ago.
Thou art my feed since thy mother gave thee birth,
Be thou stupefied, be thou out of wits.”

³ “Ka Shangma am I, Goera am I, Ever-Alert, never out of wits am I, even in dreams and divisions.”

Ka is a word of abrupt self-introduction. This is the usual self-eulogic shout on driving away tigers, expressing the heraldic of his individual origin and attributes.

THE OWL AND THE COBRA (PAGES 191-192)

¹ *Dohkupa Mikrimilthong Sahnepa Skodottong* : Literally, Dohkupa, the Goggle-Eyed, Sahnepa, the Bumpy-Headed.

KALKAME KALGRA (PAGES 193-197)

¹ *Simsang Rikam Rongdong Bra* : The bank of the Simsang River at the confluence of the Rongdong Stream at the eastern extremity of the Tura Range in Garo Hills.

² *Ahsong Nongrengreng Chiga Nengchibing* : Literally, the Country of Nongrengreng and the Watering-Place of Nengchibing : It is identified with the area of land, which is partly in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills and partly in the north-western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

³ *Dambo Ahdok* : Literally, the Land of Dambo. An area of akhing-land, with a village of the same name in it, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁴ *Snal Ahriku Patal Rongriku* : A precipitous place north of Dambo.

⁵ *Dingipa Dakgipa Bahbra* : Literally, the Bringer of Gifts, the Maker, the Bestower and Preserver of Life. Attributive names of the Supreme Goddess in the Garo pantheon.

⁶ *Ahsongtata* or *Ahsongkrita* : The ceremonial sacrificial performance at a particular sacred place of worship, once a year, in the akhing-land of a Garo Village in Garo Hills. Every tribal Garo village in Garo Hills has such a sacred place of community worship in the Village *Akhing*-land. Such a place is called *Ahsong Kosi Chiga Rangga*.

Ahsongtata or *Ahsongkrita* in a Garo Village, begins on a fixed day in the house of the *Akhing Nokma* of the Village of performance and consists of erection of fresh altars in the *Akhing Nokma*'s house and ceremonial offerings of goats, pigs and fowls at the altars in the house as well as at the permanent altar at the sacred place of worship. The *Kamal* (Officiating Priests) chants out long sacrificial songs at the altars. Much

chu (rice-beer) and *kazi* (cooked or fried meat) are freely and abundantly served out to all present in the ceremonial performance, during which the elderly male villagers, grasping *milams* and *spis* in their hands and hilariously shouting out self-eulogies to the accompaniment of rhythmic-sounds of native musical instruments, perform ritual martial dances by the altars at the sacred place of worship as well as in the house of the Village *Akhing* Nokma.

THE BIRTH OF FIRE AND AFTERMATH (PAGES 205-212)

¹ *Dakgipa Rugipa, Tattara Rabuga, Stura Pantura, Mahgipa Jagring, Suulgipa Imbanggipa, Janggini Nokgipa Jamani Biambi* :

Literally the Maker, the Moulder, the Most Worshipped and the Ever-Present, the Binder, the Coherer, the Mother Goddess the Setter of Ends, the Fixer of Edges, the Owner of Life and the Changeless Core of Life. Attributive names of the Supreme Goddess in the Garo pantheon, who is the Causeless Cause, the Matrix, the Supreme Monad, of All Beginning and who is beyond the creative, preservative and destructive influences.

² *Nosthu Nophamhu* : Literally, the Tie-Knot of Existence. In the Garo pantheon, the Goddess, who, at the command of Tattara Rabuga, fashioned the physical form and feature of the Earth.

³ *Misi Siste* : Literally, the Celestial Being who is a the Creative Urge. In the Garo pantheon, the Goddess, who assisted Nosthu Nophanthu in fashioning the Earth and in instilling creative urges into beings.

⁴ *Norekbak Norekdim* : In the Garo pantheon, the Creative Aspect of the Supreme Deity.

⁵ *Salgra* : In the Garo pantheon, the Manifested aspect of, Eternal Light represented by the All-Brilliant Sun.

⁶ *Aijangga* : Literally, Keen and Fleet.

⁷ *Misi Susime* : Literally, the Celestial Being, who brings about or "pounds out" shifting events. In the Garo pantheon, the Goddess of Fortune, represented by the Moon. Just as the different, phases of the Moon greatly determine the fate, Luck or fortune of human beings, so Misi Susime is aptly described by the Garos as the changeful Goddess of Fortune.

⁸ *Redingbanda* : Literally, the Slender chord which ties out and determines events; the rope that pulls.

⁹ *Susimema Sangkildoma* : Literally, the Mother of those Susime and that of Firmament.

¹⁰ *Asina Dingsima* : Literally, the Mother of those that that walk and crawl about the earth.

¹¹ *Dramma Chisamma Denpema Denjoma* : Literally, the Mother of those that exist by the slopes of Land, by the banks of Waters and that can be cut down and pruned.

¹² *Rabugama Ranagama* : Literally, the Mother of Rabuga and Ranaga. For want of a more appropriate word here the word *death* is used with reference to the Goddess. By *death* it does not mean *complete and total annihilation*, but complete transformation or change of state of physical existence.

According to the Garo belief, when a human being dies, he or she does not suffer complete annihilation ; but is changed into the state of a *Mehmang* or *Uhmang*, and, when a *Mehmang* dies, it is changed into the state of a *Mehte*, and, on death, the *Mehte* is transformed into the state of a *Pre* or *Mithdei* (who dies no more).

¹³ *Urendama Urenchima* : Literally, the Mother of Flightly Flash.

¹⁴ *Sretonggitchak Gitokwahrikkat* : Literally, the Red-Tongued and the Crackling-Throated. According to Garo belief, this husky-voiced and red-tongued being was born out of erst-while wedlock of the mother to Goera, the God of Thunder and Lightning.

¹⁵ *Bre Nalsa Rado Chichang* : Literally, the Island of Rado Beyond the bounds of Bre.

¹⁶ *Mykadaap Jah-a Tongkap* : Literally, the Hollow-Faced and Stout-Legged.

¹⁷ *Jogoracha* : Literally, Jogo the Brave.

¹⁸ *Dohsutot* : Literally, the Cock-Fighting. The twin stars in the proximity of the Great Orion.

¹⁹ *Matchak Rosiksak* : Literally, the Red Nimble and Swift-footed Squirrel with bushy tails.

²⁰ *Wahleraa* : Rubbing two splinters of bamboo hard against each other so as to obtain fire by means of friction. This is a Garo method of producing fire.

²¹ *Wahltot tota* : The most common process of producing fire among the Garos consisting in striking a piece of *wahltot* (a piece of flint) with a piece of steel so as to catch the sparks by means of floss of *sawè* (*Careya Urens*). The back-edge of a knife-blade is usually utilized for striking a piece of flint-stone and holding the floss of *sawè* together with the flint-stone so that it easily catches the sparks produced thereby. Before the advent of match-boxes in the Achikland, the *wahltot tota* was most commonly resorted to by the Achik families.

²² *Bamin Racha Sojon Gitel* : Literally, Bamin the Brave and Sojon the Lord.

²³ *Matma Jähkhol* : Literally, the Trail of a Buffalo. The broad, luminous zone in the sky, the Milky Way, is so called by the Garos.

²⁴ *Menggo ripe* : Literally, the Carrying of a Cat. It is one of the constellations containing seven minor stars, three of which in a straight line form *Menngo ripe*.

²⁵ *Mehgadop Samarop Wah-ambong Wahthimbong* : Liter-

ally, the place of thick mixed jungle, where drooping tiger-grass, dense clumps of gigantic bamboos and other tall grass exuberantly grow.

²⁶ *Waekmeh-a Wachek Phante* : Literally, Waek, the Male, and Wachek, the Bachelor, who is wont to frequently open his mouth and show his full teeth.

²⁷ *Siram Racha Bolking Gitel* : Literally, Siram, the Heroic Being and Bolking, the Majestic Lord. The name of the first and the only tree which is believed by the Garos to have been originated along with the Mother Earth and grew into immense majestic dimensions but which was later on destroyed by storm and lightning. It is also believed by the Garos that this tree had been growing alone long before the appearance of vegetation and different forms of land-life on earth.

²⁸ *Ahgitchak Rongbare, Misirong, Kimkharong, Maadi Rongkuchi, Mangshang Ahsong, Darang Petchong, Papera, Koasi Minduri* :

Names of areas of land, hills and places in the eastern, south-eastern and north-eastern parts of Garo Hills.

²⁹ *Kalika Mogua* : Name of a hill, with a rock-cave in it.

³⁰ *Rikra brothers* : The brothers of *Matchadus* (tiger-men), belonging to Rikra clan.

³¹ *The Matcha uncles* : The tigers who were uncle and nephew to one another.

THE ORIGIN OF THE RICE-BEER FERMENT (PAGE 213).

¹ *Tiebangshi Misi Noebale* : Literally, the Celestial Woman named Tiebangshi Noebale.

² *Tiranni Rangsilchi* : the immortal demi-goddess named Tiranni Rangsilchi.

³ *Suengma Tottengma* : Literally, the Mother of Sueng and of Totteng.

⁴ *Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare Nore Chire* : Literally, Nore Chire, who, as a subterranean region, is known as Bokjare and Dimjare as a denizen of the underwater world.

⁵ *Khorengpa Khobinpa Ganggipok Chidual* : Literally, the Gigantic White-Winged One who is the Father of Khoreng and of Khobin. The name of the patriarchal head of the hawks.

⁶ *Mehgam Nongstyng* : The division of the tribe of the real Garo origin, known as the *Mehgams* to the Garos and as the *Lyngams* to the Khasis, inhabiting the western part of Khasia and Jaintia Hills. Some Mehgams inhabit the regions of Garo Hills, bordering the Khasia and Jaintia Hills. The Mehgam division of the Garos have *chatchis* or *maharies* of their own which are synonymous to the *chatchis* or *maharies* of the Garos in Garo Hills; such for instance, Rengcheng or Nongthloh *chatchi* of the Mehgams is as same as Chambugong *chatchi* in Garo Hills,

Nongbreit *chatchi* of the Mehgams is as same as Rongmuthu *chatchi* of the Garos in Garo Hills, Nongsnobar *chatchi* of the Mehgams is as same as the Gahre or Gagra *chatchi* of the Garos in Garo Hills, and so on with respect to other *chatchis* or *maharies* of the Mehgams of Khasia and Jaintia Hills and of the Garos in Garo Hills. The mystic chords of memory from ancient times still remain as sacred ligaments in numberless ways between the Garos of Garo Hills, the Mehgams and Jaintias of Khasia and Jaintia Hills, who are all known to be of the one and the same maternal head.

DEJAN AND THE MATCHADU (PAGES 214-220).

¹ *Asa, Agin, Jora, Jogin, Ilasi, Niashi, Ilgosh, Gosh* : No particular earthly meanings are attached to these words except that they are generally taken as the Ghost names of numerals from 1 to 9.

² *Asa, Agin, Jora, Jogin, Bina, Khawa, Ona, Onget, Olashi, Gangget* : These words bear no particular mundane meanings to human beings; but they are merely taken as the names of numerals of the tiger from 1 to 10.

ORIGIN OF POISON (PAGES 221-223).

¹ *Chiagipok Chimechangbok Chiinggil Chitinggil* : Literally, the Whirlpool of Shimmering White and Speckled Water.

² *Sodu Bakrepa Banda Jangmepa* : Literally, known as Sodu as the Father of Bakre and Banda as the Father of Jangme.

³ *Chambildohmapa Narangpawangga* : Literally, the parent shadlock tree (*Citrus Decumana* or *Batabee Leboo*) and the age-old orange tree (*Citrus Aurantium*). These trees are believed by the Garos to have grown for ages past in the area of land, now known as the *akhing*-land of Baringgri in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁴ *Mikrongret Gangchingchet* : Literally, One with lolling goggle eyes and scintillating wings.

⁵ *The Goddess Dakgipa Rugipa Patigipa Rahrongipa* : Literally, the Goddess, Who is the Maker, the Moulder, the Bestower of Dividends of Gifts and Good Things, the Apportioner of Gifts and of Material and Spiritual Wealth. The attributive names of the Supreme Deity in the Garo pantheon, who is known to the Garos as such by more than one hundred sixty attributive names.

THE LIVING BEINGS WHO FIRST ACQUIRED STEEL (PAGES 224-226)

¹ *Duh-a Raja Jingi Nokma* : Literally, Duh-a, the King, Jingi, the Lord.

² *Ahning Gring Wana Chining Gring Wacha Ahsong Nong-*

rengreng Chiga Nengchibing : Literally, As a subterranean area, it is known as Gring Wana, the Abode of the Moher-Tooth, and as Gring Wacha, the Cutting of Teeth, as an under-water World, the Country of Nongrenreng and the Watering-Place of Nengchibing. This area of land is identified by some Garos as the area of the village-land of Mangshanhg, where there is an extinct volcano, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills, bordering Khasi and Jamthia Hills.

³ *Dakgipa Rugipa Tatara Rubaga* : Literally, the Maker, the Moulder, the Most Worshipped, the Most profoundly Taken. The attributive names of the Supreme Deity in the Garo pantheon.

⁴ *Chiginap Rongjamdap Chibrasni Wahge Chongsni* : Literally, the Place where water flows through the Subterranean Conduit, where Cadjan-like Big Rocks stand, the confluence of the seven Streams of Water where grow seven Clumps of *Jati* Bamboos (*Bambusa tulda*). There is a place, bearing these names and sacred to the Garo priests, at the vicinity of villages Rongribo and Kalak on the upper stage of the Dimring River in the mid-northern part of Garo Hills.

⁵ *Gakatram Melaram Dikginram Baweram* : Literally, the Place of Ascension, the Mustering-Place, where Greetings took place and where vast throngs of men hovered around.

⁶ *Shangma Maopa Ranja Chongdopa Seksopa Sekrapa* : Literally, Shangma, the Father of Mao, who is known as Ranja as the Father of Chongdo, Sekso and Sekra. In the Garo traditional history of the various forms of life from their origin, this hero is the original procreator of Wana Wangga Dudu Chompa Aropa Bindopa, the patriarchal tiger.

⁷ *Shangma Khorengpa Ranja Khobinpa Ganggipok Chidual* : Literally, Shangma, the Father of Khoreng, known as Ranja as the Father of Khobin, the Gigantic White-Winged. He is the patriarchal head of the Hawks, Eagles and Fishing-Hawks.

⁸ *Wana Wangga Dudu Chompa Aropa Bindopa* : Literally, the Open-Teethed Dudu, the Father of Chom, Aro and Bindo. The patriarchal head of the tigers.

⁹ *Shangma Ahning Silginchi Ranja Tantani* : Literally, Silginchi Ranja Tantani, the Subterranean Denizen, who belonged to the Shangma sept.

¹⁰ *Slangphakhuri Patalphanikin* : Literally, Beneath the Rock-Cliffs, Under the Shadows of Frowning Massive Rocks.

¹¹ *Ahsong Badaka Chiga Nodimba* : Literally, the Country of Badaka and the Watering-Place of Nodimba.

¹² *Shangma Mikkhelsi Ranja Jahbangsi Korongmeh-a Kochongphante Choka Choksi Awalduri Gaderongde* : Literally, Shangma, the Slant-Eyed, Ranja, the Slender-Legged, Korong, the Male, Kochong, the Bachelor, who is named Gaderongde, the Male, Kochong, the Bachelor, who is named Choka Choksi Awalduri Gaderongde.

MOTHER OF SALT (PAGE 227-228).

¹ *Karitchi* : Literally, the Incorruptible Person of Alkali. The Garos obtain *karitchi*, a kind of Soda Bicarb, by burning dried vegetable matter, dried young *wahnok* bamboos (*Pambusa teres*) and dried logs of certain trees and by decoction of the ashes in water. The *karitchi*, thus obtained, is used in cooking curry.

² *Aema Dilema Songduma Sagalma* : Literally, the Mother of Fullness and Overflowing, the Mother of Songdu (Brahmaputra) and of the Ocean.

THE ORIGIN OF RICE (PAGES 229-233)

¹ *Gisil Bol Gitol Bol Rikge Samol Jahphang Monol* : Literally, the Tree with Flinty Bole, the Mighty Majestic Sky-High Tree with its Vast Out-Spread Precious Overhanging Branches, Overshadowing the whole World, with its Immense-Girthed Base.

² *Giting Dingje Rane Dingje* : Literally, Dingje, the Mother-Banyan Tree, Dingje, the Soft Steely-Voiced Queenly Being.

³ *Ahjarek Chijapa* : Literally, the Bottom-Edge of the Earth, the Vaulted-Foundation of Waters.

⁴ *Silchi Ringoram, Gitol Tingtotram, Dohkatchi Nangroram Rikgitok Nangsatram, Matma Ongrururam. Kitma Balgitoram, Mongma Dangtoram, Matchu Kinma Onram, Udare Jakbri Mehongma Kolatchi* : Literally, the area of Land where the Spirit Silchi Used to Descend, where Shining Jewels used to issue forth, dripping by, where Beads of Jade lay hanging by, where the most precious Necklaces lay swinging by, where huge herds of Buffaloes used to pass stampeding down, where the *Kitma* tree (*Rhus semialta*) used to blossom upward profusely, where the *Udare* tree (*Sterculia villosa*) bud forth broad Leaves, four in number from each axis, where thirty-trunked Clumps of *Mehongma* tree (*Bauhinia variegata*) used to grow in exuberant luxuriance, where myriads of Cows used to mass together and where vast numbers of Elephants used to assemble to play at Weight-Lifting.

⁵ *Jaru Meh-a Jabal Phante Okkhuangshi Jahpat-Chonsi* : Literally, Jaru, the All-Sweeping Male, Jabal, he Purging-Bachelor, the Thin Hollow-Stomached one with Slender-Calved Legs. The Wind-Divinity is so called by the Garos because the trail of the gale, wind-storm, whirl-wind or cyclone is often visible in the jungles of Garo Hills, as if impressed by the slender legs of a mighty sweeping Giant and because its speed is such as if the Giant-Sweeper is running empty-stomached.

⁶ *Doh-olwak Dohdikki* : Literally, the Gifted warrior-bird. The patriarchal head of the hoopoes.

⁷ *Ahning Nosiksik Chining Nomindil Ahning Diperi Chining Dipera* : Literally, One named Nosiksik, as a dweller of the

Subterranean region, and Nomindil, who is also called Dipera, as an Underwater denizen, and also named Diperi as a Being of the underground area. The matriarchal head of the small bird, known as *doh-amik*, which the Garos believe to be the visible guardian of rice plants in paddy-fields.

⁸ *Misi Apilpa Saljong Galapa*: Literally, as the Celestial Being, known as Apilpa, the Father of Apil, and named Galapa, the Father of Gala, as the Sun-Divinity.

⁹ *Benagong Rangsaljong Wakmethom Sangkhathi*: Literally, the Place, where there's a *rang* (valuable gong) of the Sun-Divinity by the *Benagong* (*Merrenia umbellata*), known as Sangkhathi, where the *Wakme* creeper (*Mucuna bracteata*) used to form skeins of mystic cords by themselves. It is an ancient sacred place in the *akhing*-land of Darang Petchong, belonging to Rongmuthu-Wahsra *chatchi*, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

¹⁰ *Ahni Apilpa Chini Galapa*: Literally, as a dweller of the terrestrial surface of the earth, known as Apilpa, the Father of Apil, and named Galapa, the Father of Gala, as an inhabitant by the waters.

¹¹ *Nokkol Johsiksok Rori Johbongbong*: Literally, the Servant, who fried and stirred up ceaselessly; the Alien, who Fried and Served in a Frying-Pan to Waste.

¹² *Krurangru Grikmesal Deokracha Degong Gitel*: Literally, the Versatile Dancer, named Krurangruru, who is Deok, the Brave and Degong, the Lord. The mythological name of the paddy-cutting squirrel common in Garo Hills.

¹³ *Mattengke Mesewal*: Literally, the Rodent, who is the Rat carrying fire alongwith.

¹⁴ *Sugra Mantija*: The patriarchal head of the spider-like water-insect, which lies floating on water and which is always seen constantly and rapidly moving to and fro on the surface of the water at the same place.

THE FIRST ADULTERER (PAGES 234-237).

¹ *Ahning Jinjini Chining Jinjina*: Literally, the One who, as a dweller of the Subterranean regions, is known as Jinjini, and as Jinjina, as the denizen of the Under-water world.

² *Koppalmari Malbitchi Chengkopjop*: Literally, the One with the hooded-head who is named Malbitchi, the Back-Bending.

³ *Ahnang brothers and Dilkhang uncles*: The well-known local gods in the Garo pantheon, who are believed to be residing by the Pool, called Ahnang Adilkhang Tematchi Ponggro, in the Ildek (Deosila) River.

⁴ *Ahguare Ronepakdare*: Literally, the land surrounded by Fortress-like walls of Rock.

⁵ *Khorengpa Mikkingbanda Kobinpa Jahthengchua*: Literally, One, who is the Father of Khoreng, with smooth-surfaced

frowny forehead, and One, who is the Father of Kobin, the Stilty-Legged.

⁶ *Chibrasni Wahge Chongsni* : Literally, the Confluence of Seven Streams by the Seven Clumps of *Wahge* (*Bambusa tulda*).

⁷ *Dri Ahkhuchot Rado Chubanda* : An area of land within the Village-Land of Mangshang in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills, bordering Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

⁸ *Niba Ajepa Jonja Giljepa* : Literally, One, who is known as Niba, as the Father of Aje, and named Jonja, as the Father of Gilje. A human patriarch who is believed by the Garos to have afterwards been metamorphosed into a peacock.

⁹ *Maadi Rongkuchi* : Literally, the Place by the Maadi (the present Mahadeo) Stream, where exudes saliva-like frothy water out of massive stones. Name of a place on the Balphakram Plateau in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills, renowned in the Garo lore and legend as the site of a very ancient market-place.

¹⁰ *Salgra* : Literally, the Sun which is resplendent with Glowing Ceaseless Light. Here it means the manifested Sun-God. In the Garo pantheon he is known also as *Salgra Moepa*, meaning *Salgra*, the Father of Ever-Moving Light.

¹¹ *Saljongpatra Rongdohgachol* : Literally, the Majestic Gate of Rocks, which is the Door-Bolt of *Saljong*, the Sun-Divinity. The Garos identify this Place to be on a Hill, known at present as *Sonapahar*, in the north-western part of modern Khasia and Jaintia Hills. On this Hill there is an identifiable sacred Stone-Altar on which oblations were said to have been offered by ancient Garo devotees to the Invisible Powers and Divinities, whom they worshipped in keeping to their ancient form of animistic nature-worship.

THE FIRST MALADY (PAGES 238-239).

¹ *Chameh-apa Bolagipi* : Literally, the Elderly One, the Aged-Tree of the primitive forest. Referred to an aged person of wide experience in material and spiritual affairs and one who is profoundly worldly-wise.

² *Dakbude Rangsha Kamal Kilterangre Chokkephante* : Literally, *Dakbude*, who is *Rangsha*, the cross-tempered Priest, and who, as one stiff-necked, self-willed Bachelor, is known as *Kilterangre*.

³ *Mune Dingdil Sahne Bandil* : Literally, in her relation to *Mune*, the Mother of human beings who settled down, she is known as *Dingdil*; and, as related to *Sahne*, the mother of human beings who first began to cultivate the land, she is known as *Bandil*.

⁴ *Duh-e Khale Charenobon* : Name of a forest naiad, who, according to Garo mythology, is capable of decoying young men for marital purposes.

⁵ *Rikra brothers* : Sons of a *Matchadu*, who is a half-man and half-tiger.

⁶ *Matcha uncles* : Tigers who are uncle and nephew to each other.

⁷ *Misipa Saljongpa* : Literally, the Father of Misi and Saljong. Misi here refers to Misi Susime and Saljong refers to Misi Saljong, both well-known major divinities in the Garo pantheon.

⁸ *Walma Daria Agal Sangkia* : Literally, the Wasting, the All-Consuming Inferno of Raging Fire.

THE FIRST RAPE OF A HUMAN SPIRIT (PAGES 240-242).

¹ *Cholsi Okkhuangsi Jari Jahpha Cholsi* : Literally, the Thin One, the Hollow-Stomached Jari, the Thin-Soled One.

² *Wahphangma Ringrangma* : Literally, the Mother of Wahphang (the Clump of *Bambusa teres*).

³ *Dura Kochokrong* : Literally, Dura, the Conical-Headed.

⁴ *Songdu Koberong* : Literally, Songdu, the Bald-Headed.

⁵ *Golapa Nagande* : Literally, the Father of Gola, the Naked One.

⁶ *Kuhsimang Chongdingpa* : Literally, One who is Long-Bearded, the Father of Chongding, the Tall and Lanky. These are names of one-Divinity.

⁷ *Chasama Mongjima* : Literally, One who is the Mother of Chasa and Mongji.

⁸ *The olivaceous rope* : The virulent green-yellowish rope, which is believed by the Garos to be in possession of Abet Rora Rakka Ganda, the malignant god of rills and fountains, and, binding the vital human principle with which, can cause serious illness and death to any person.

⁹ *Khatchi Biare* : In the Garo pantheon, the Celestial Messenger, the Spirit Biare.

¹⁰ *Rangshi Tokkini* : In the Garo pantheon, Tokkini, the Immortal heavenly Being.

¹¹ *Ahni Manè* : Literally, Manè, the Mother of the Earth.

¹² *Chini Pildè* : Literally, Pildè, the Mother of the Water.

^{13, 14, 15} *Ahbgema Disengma, Matchima Rorima, and Mahsima Mahbema* : Ahbgema Disengma, Matchima Rorima and Mahsima Mahbema are matriarchal heads respectively of the Ahbgem, Matchi and Chisak divisions of the Garos.

¹⁶ *Abet Rora* : In the Garo pantheon, Abet Rora is the god of fountains and rills. He is often inimical to human beings. Whenever any human being inadvertently intrudes upon his habitation, he proves himself to be an unforgiving fiend and utilizes the olivaceous rope against the offender, in which case a propitiatory sacrificial offerings to him becomes necessary.

¹⁷ *Shangma Dripa Chondipa* : Literally, Shangma, the Father of Dri and Chondi. An ancient patriarch of man.

¹⁸ *Angkerong Damchong* : The Matriarchal Head of Crabs.

THE HOT GREEN-YELLOW ROPE OF MALADY (PAGES 243-246).

¹ *Anti Racha Ahkang Gitel* : Literally, the Stately Market where living beings muster strong for transactions of business.

² *Bokring Meh-a Baling Phante* : Literally, Bokring, the Male, and Baling, the Bachelor.

³ *Walangpa* : Literally, the Father of Walang. A celestial being.

⁴ *Skal Laikoksi Kamal Tusidumu* : Literally, Laikoksi, the Spacious-Bellied Vampire, who is the Sleepy-Eyed Wizard.

⁵ *Mahsima Mahbema Malikma Malbanma* : Literally, the Mother of Mahsi, Mahbe, Malik and Malban. The goddess who is believed by the Garos to be the guardian divinity of the herbivorous animals, such as cows, buffaloes and the bison (*Bibos Gaurus*).

⁶ *Sahnepa Munepa* : Literally, the Father of Sahne and Mune.

⁷ *Khatchi Biari* : The celestial Spirit Biari, the brother of Misi Susime.

⁸ *Shangma Dripa Ranja Chondipa* : Literally, Shangma, the Father of Dri, who is known as Ranja, as the Father of Chondi. A mighty human patriarch of remote antiquity.

⁹ *Chaneh-apa Bolagipi Khatchi Biari Rangshi Tokkini* : Literally, Rangshi Tokkini, the unerring divine Spirit Biari, who has grown wise with age and who is old and fully matured just as the age-old primitive tree.

¹⁰ *A fountain in Dambo* : Dambo is an area of akhing-land of Village Dambo and of the existing Government Reserved Forest of Dambo in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

THE FIRST DEATH (PAGES 247-252)

¹ *Mehgam Gairipa Mande Singeripa Mehgam Dimrang Chada Gongman Mande Dimrim Mehgam Dimsim* : Literally, The man, who, as a member of the Mehgam division of the Garos, is known as Gairipa, the Father of Gairi, and, Singeripa, the Father of Singeri, as a Mande (Achik or Garo), who, as a Mehgam, belonged to Dimrang *chatchi* (clan) and to Chada Gongman, as a Mande, and who, as a Mande, is named as Dimrim and Dimsim as a Mehgam.

² *Antiracha Ahkanggitel* : Literally, the brave market and the lordly mustering-place.

³ *Dimdimpatal Challangagal* : Literally, the open rocky field of Dimdim and the wide grassy plain of Challenge. An area of plain land, the site of an ancient market, in the southern bank of modern Kamrup District, not far from modern Boko.

⁴ *Gijangbra Dilsinggitel* : Literally, the Confluence of Gijang and the lordly Dilsing River. Both Gijang and Dilsing rise in the Khasia land Jainthia Hills, join together at modern

Hahim Bazar, about ten miles south of Boko, which is on the modern Assam Trunk Road, and flow to the Brahmaputra.

⁵ *Rongtiidru Chamegaru* : Names of twin hillocks in the southern part of Kamrup District, bordering Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

⁶ *Shangma Sangreng Ahning Ranja Dohpa Chiring* : Literally, Sangreng, who belonged to the Shangma matry-phratry, who is known as Ranja, as a Being of the subterranean region, and Dohpa, as a dweller beside the rills. He is a being gifted with rare occult and mystic powers.

⁷ *Dina Penareng* : Literally, ferocious sharp-teethed monster.

⁸ *Wangga Miksimba* : Literally, the Open mouthed, Bristled with Teeth, and Sooty-Faced. A mystic name for the tiger ¶ 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *Dina Okpet*, *Wangga Dimpet*, *Sae Dinna*, *Gilne Sae Dohbet* : According to Garo Mythology, these are minor divinities, which can cause misfortune, fatal accidents, illness or death to human beings.

¹⁴ *Sokchuan Bri Meruan Ahding* : Literally, the Hill of the *Sokchuan* tree (*Alstonia Scholaris*) and the Hillock of *Meruan* (Paddy-Winnowing Fan). Name of a hill of minor altitude, part of which appear like a paddy-husking fan (*ruan*), in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

¹⁵ *Ahnang Adilkang Tematchi Ponggro* : The twin pools in the Ildek (or Deosila) River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills. The pools are believed by the local Garos to be the abode of evil spirits.

¹⁶ *Rimerinok Kalmedoh-ol Misi Chengmatpa Saljong Chengchipa* : Literally, Rimerinok Kalmedoh-ol, who is known by the teknonymic name of Chengmatpa, the Father of Chengmat, and, as a Celestial Being, by the appellation of Chengchipa, and that is in relation to the Sun-Divinity.

¹⁷ *Kharupa Chonggalpa* : Literally, One who is the Father of Kharu and of Chonggal. The diviner or one who is adept in the art of divination.

¹⁸ *Misi Saljong* : In the Garo pantheon, the Celestial Divinity, who is iconomatically represented by Sun.

¹⁹ "*Chase chahsoaignok, dingse dingsoaignok* : " Literally, "I shall but eat wisely beforehand, and I shall but perform an act of divination prudentially."

²⁰ *Ahsra Malenggoka* : A mystic name of a place, not far from the upper stage of the Ildek River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²¹ *Kapera Ginggarap* : Name of a hillock on the left bank of the Ildek River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²² *Ahsong Gahgitik Chiga Changsiram* : Literally, the land of Gahgitik and the Watering-Place of Changsiram. Gahgitik means *Violent stamping of Earth* by feet.

²³ *Chichura River* : The main tributary of the Manda River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²⁴ *Daram Dasing Rakka Ganda* : Name of a place in the *akhing*-land of Gabil, north of Rongjeng, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

²⁵ *Mangru Mangram Chitmag Ahsong Balmang Chiga* : Literally, the Place of dissolution of visible physical existence or the Place where Man's state of physical existence undergoes complete change, which is the Country of Chitmag and the Watering Place of Balmang. This is the Chitmag (or Kylash) Hill, which is commonly known to the Garos as "*Chitmag Tingring Rema Bangjang*". The Atongs, a division of the Garos, call it "Waemong," which means "Great Deity." Balmang, which is generally called Baljong by the local Garos, is the main spur of the Chitmag Hill. It is the most prominent Hill in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills.

The Garos believe that their disembodied spirits first come to the top of the Chitmag Hill before their final journey to the happy regions of the Spirit-Land in the Great Beyond, there to stay for a period of time in order to be reborn into the world.

²⁶ *Ahtakmeh-a Jongtak Phante* : Literally, Ahtak, the Male, and Jongtak, the Bachelor. The mythological name of a small red-headed black flying insect, which is called "*chitotra*." Swarms of this insect are often seen feeding on leaves of *galda*, sorrel plant (*Rumex vesicarius Leguminosae*) and other plants during rainy season in Garo Hills.

²⁷ *The Ghost Bhogia* : According to Garo belief concerning death, the Ghost Bhogia is one of the immortal spirits who first greets the spirit of the dead and guide it to its destined niche in the spirit-land.

²⁸ *Khatchi Chahnapa* : According to the belief of the Garos concerning the dead, Khatchi Chahnapa is one of the chief immortal spirits, whose duty is to receive the spirits of the dead and escort them to their deserved state of bliss.

²⁹ *Bonepa anepa* : An ancient patriarch of man who is believed by the Garos to be the first person since the world began to clear jungles for *jhum* or shifting cultivation and to carry on such method of cultivation of land.

³⁰ *Melumang Misal Chahram* : Literally, the Place where Ghosts used to take their mid-day meals, while on their journey to the spirit-land. A place by a sooty stream on the top of the Balphakram Plateau in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills is so called and identified by the Garos.

³¹ *Boldak Matchu Kharam* : Literally, the Boldak tree (*Schima wallichii*), at which cows are used to be tethered. The Garos kill bulls for their dead, *not at all for their beef*, but in the undying belief that the spirits of the cows are the only fit ones to accompany human spirits to the happy and holy regions in

the spirit-land in the Great Beyond and that, if the ghost of a human being is not accompanied by the spirit of a cow, the self-same ghost is never cordially and warmly welcomed in the spiritland by the ghosts of the relatives who had gone there before. Accordingly, most blessed is the ghost of a person for whom a large number of cows have been killed both at the time of death and at the post-funeral performance, known as *Mungona* or *Saram*, over the person! The Garos believe that the spirits of the cows are actually led by the spirits of the persons for whom they are killed at their death. Now, in order to free themselves from encumbrance, while taking their mid-day meals, the spirits, who lead the spirits of cows to the spirit-land, must of necessity tether the spirits of the cows to a particular *Boldak* tree, growing at a place near *Mehmang Misal Chahram*. Here, it is referred to that particular *Boldak* tree.

The original *Boldak* tree, which is referred to in the story and which, as solemnly attested by the most elderly Garos of the locality, was growing hard by the place identified by them as *Mehmang Misal Chahram* on the Plateau, had been destroyed by storm some decades ago. It is believed by the present-day Garos that the ghosts have ever since been using an upstanding rock, which is on the same site where the *Boldak* tree grew, instead to tether their cows, while taking mid-day meals on wending their way to the spirit-land.

³² *Chidimak Chianggal*: Literally, the Black or Sooty Stream of Water. The Garo cremate their dead on funeral pyres of dried wood from time immemorial past. It is believed by the Garos that the spirits of their dead used to take their ceremonial dips in a particular inky stream of water, known as *Chianggal Chidimak*, on the sacred Plateau of *Balphakram*, on their way to the holy and happy regions in the spirit-land in the *Dal'gipa Nalsa* (the Great Beyond); in order to wash away all earthly impurities as well as soot caused by cremation; that, after their baths in the *Chianggal Chidimak*, the spirits, of the dead, seeing the stars, world on world in space, feel themselves deeply yearning towards the Infinite and that, but due to their love for their own kith and kin whom they left behind, they feel irresistible desire, especially on having post-funeral performances carried on over them, to be reborn in the same sacred motherhood. On such an implicit belief, the Garos, who are really pure Garos in life and spirit and who still solemnly observe the religious injunctions based on their particular form of animistic nature-worship, are judiciously particular on carrying out needful obsequies of the dead in their homes.

³³ *Racha Ahsong*: Literally, the Land of Blissful Glory; the Land of the Strong, the Noble and the Brave. The ideal Spirit-land of the Brave Dead of the Garos in the yet Unexplained Great Beyond.

³⁴ *Nengba Chiga* : Literally, the Watering-Place of Nengba. The Chief Lordly Immortal Human Spirit, named Nengba, is the Ideal *Purush* (Man), who opened the Country of *Racha Ahsong* for the first time for the worthy dead and who first used the Watering-Place. So the true Garo *songsariks* (the unconverted to any alien faith) firmly believe.

THE STORY OF THE MOKEYS (PAGES 253-254)

¹ *Dikabri Thimbang Ahdang Bolma Riting Amak Thengthang* : Literally, the Hill of Dika, the Hillock of Thimbang, the Row of Age-Old Primitive Gigantic Trees, Where resound the noisy chatterings of the short-tailed common brown monkeys.

² *The Country of Rongchu* : Literally, the Country of high flat rocks. An area of land in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

³ *Ahsong Restiche Chiga Badaka* : Literally, the Land of Resuche and the Watering-Place of Badaka.

⁴ *Petchong* : An area of *akhing*-land of Petchong in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁵ *Ahsong Nodesol Chiga Thokesor* : Literally, the Land of Nodesol and the Watering-Place of Thokesor. The area of Land, where there is a hillock, known at present as Thokeswar, in the Habraghat Pargana, in the modern Coalpara District, bordering the artificially-created Garo Hills District.

⁶ *The hill of Nanggera Dohmesal* : A minor hill in the north-western part of Garo Hills. It is also called Ranggira.

MAKING OF STONES AND VEGETATION (PAGES 261-262)

¹ *Ahsong Rongribo Chiga Mikchido* : Literally, the Land of Rongribo and the Watering-Place of Mikchido. Ancient Garo name of the area of land, at present incorporated in the Village-Land of Gabil Anem. Daningka and the riparian areas in the vicinity of the Chichura-Manda Rivers in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

² *Donari Waknahil* : Literally, Donari, the Swine-Eared.

THE EARTHQUAKE (PAGE 263)

¹ *Nosthu Nophantu* : Literally, the Tie-Knot of all beings. According to Garo belief, at the command of Tatara Rabuga, the Supreme Goddess, Nosthu Nophantu fashioned the Earth.

² *Aphitpa Agopa* : Literally, the Father of Aphit and of Ago. Aphitpa means the Father of Cleaver or Splitter and Agopa means the Father of Sower on Land.

³ *Phitrang and Gorang* : Other attributive names of Aphitpa

Agopa, literally meaning "One who splits the Earth," and "One who shoots at the Earth."

⁴ *Ahnma Ahdindin Chiinma Chidindin* : Literally, the Mother, Who Furrowed Up the Earth and Caused the Waters to be Divided into Parts.

⁵ *Aema Ditema* : Literally, the Mother of Fullness and of Over-Flowing.

⁶ *Songduma* : Literally, the Mother of Songdu (i.e., the Brahmaputra).

⁷ *Sagalma* : Literally, the Mother of the Oceans, the Wide Expanse of Waters.

⁸ *Ebikbik Esiksik* : Literally, the Wilderness of Waters Flowing Ceaselessly Round About Without Turning Away Elsewhere.

⁹ *Siksikma* : Literally, the Mother of the Restless Seeker of Low Levels.

¹⁰ *Wilwilma* : Literally, the Mother Circular Flowing or of Eddies or Circularly Flowing Current of Waters.

¹¹ *Terenga* : Literally, the Littoral and Sub-Littoral Areas of Land.

(Compare the scientific explanation on Earthquake in *The Physical Geography For Indian Students* by Dr. Cyril S. Fox, D.Sc., M.I. Min.E., F.G.S., published by Messrs. MACMILLAN & Co., LTD., ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON.)

THE FIRST TREE (PAGE 264)

¹ *Siram Racha Bolkhing Gitel* : Literally, Siram, the Majestic, and Bolkhing, the Lordly Being.

THE BIRTH OF THE BANYAN TREE (PAGE 265)

¹ *Giting Ringe Ringse Rani Dingse Dingse* : Literally, Giting, the Soft-Slender Armed, Bounteously Upright, the Sweet Steely-Voiced Queen, Who Lives Long.

² *Karupa Chonggalpa Phawangpa Birapa* : Literally, One who is the Father of Kharu, Chonggal and Bira. An Anchorite, who is a Soothsayer.

³ *Nokol Simareng Rori Japilsi* : Literally, Simareng, the Dark-Hued Slave who is of Backward-Toed, Stilty-Legged Alien Race.

THE END OF THE FIRST TREE (PAGES 268-270)

¹ *Susimema Sangkildoma* : Literally, the Mother of Susime and of Sangkildo. The Goddess in the Garo pantheon, who, according to the nature of different roles played by her in executing universal scheme of things, is known to the Garos by many different names. She is also known as Sona Kali Abu Renche.

To the Garos, her death does not mean her complete annihilation but her voluntary transformation, rendering herself ordinarily invisible, to human beings

² *Meen Mechik Rongding Tira* : Literally, the Female, named Meen, who is a glossy-skinned, slender-Figured Elegant Lady of noble birth.

³ *Gingbo Ah-igija Chalo Mahsigija* : Literally, Gingbo, the Block-Head and Chalo, the One who does not simply understand.

⁴ *Rengra Balsa Sriri Budhi* : Literally, Rengra, the Foppish, Sriri, the Nimble Prune. The patriarchal head of the arboreal animal, known as *gilwe* in Garo.

⁵ *Manna Kanga* : Literally, Manna, the Disclaimer, who does not want to see. The patriarchal head of the arboreal animal, named *rarek* in Garo.

⁶ *Saron Benga* : Literally, Saron, the Deaf. The patriarchal head of the flying-squirrels.

⁸ *Chirama khalema aldama thangsikma* : Literally, the Mother of *chira*, the viscous vermillion, of *khale*, the jet black, of *alda*, the deep yellow, and of *thangsik*, the deep green.

⁹ *Malik Malban* : Literally, the One who crawls along. The strong wind which blows over the surface of the earth.

¹⁰ *Sisha Remba* : Literally, Remba, the Circular (i.e., the Cyclone).

¹¹ *Balwa Enok* : The Wind-God, who travels wide and long.

¹² *Methdei Khongthok* : The Speckled God of Hail-Storm.

¹³ *Impret Khimgro* : Literally, the One who is Loud Blast.

¹⁴ *Stil Ronggrim* : Literally, the Conglomerated Mass of large Balls of Hail.

¹⁵ *Khising Phingweng* : The Mother of Turtles with broad steely Integument.

¹⁶ *Matram Chireng* : The Glossy Furred Water-Otter.

SAMMISI SAMJANGGI (PAGES 272-273)

¹ *Sammisi Samjanggi* : Literally, the Millet-Plant of Life.

² *Dikki and Bandi* : Of all the known heroes in the *Khatta Agana*, *Khatta Doka* or *Saling Ring'a*, that is, the existing Epiclore of the Garos, *Dikki* is always portrayed as the wisest, the finest, the noblest and the most even-tempered man, indeed, as the Flower of Humanity, who stands at the head of Human Evolution of all time, while *Bandi* is always sung of as the strongest athlete, the bravest and the most sagacious warrior of man.

³ *Ahning Chire Chining Nore* : Literally, One who is known as *Chire*, as a dweller of the subterranean region, and *Nore*, as a denizen of the underwater World.

⁴ *Namgija Ongchengani Biap* : Literally, the Place of Origin of Evil.

⁵ *Duri Songmong Jakhing Thekam* : Literally, One who engirdles the world, with shackles on legs.

WERAM JAMBAL (PAGES 274—276)

¹ *Rongbal Songsak* : Literally, Songshak, the Rock-Flower.

² *Weram Jambal* : Literally, the Place where crowds used to hang around of their own accord and where swinging for pleasure is done by them. A small hillock close to Village Jambal gittim in the *akhing*-land of Village Rongjeng in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

³ *Go-o-o-go-go* : An expression of pleasure in swinging.

⁴ *The Jambal Rill* : The little rill which rises from the Jambal Hillock.

⁵ *Go-go-go-gaya-go* : A chorus expressing feelings of pleasure or mirth while swinging.

⁶ *Khawara Matbilrang* : My husband who is Bear.

⁷ *Tosea Simchiranga* : Literally, Tosea, the Glossy Black-skinned.

⁸ *Incheng Chibrenga* : Literally, Incheng, the Crack-Brain.

⁹ *Chelmang Gitchaksrang* : Literally, Chelmang, the Broad-Chested, Red-skinned.

¹⁰ *Binipa Singgipa* : Literally, the Father of Bini and Singgi.

¹¹ *Toromsi Jasre* : Literally, Toromsi, the Long-legged.

¹² *Ganggua Chiduar* : Literally, the Giant-Gnat.

¹³ *Bandi and Gringrang* : The strongest warrior-heroes most frequently sang of in praises in the epic-songs in the Garo Epic lore.

THE OWL AND THE MUNTJAC (PAGES 279—284)

¹ *Ahsong Maadi Chiga Rongkuchi* : Literally, the Country of Maadi and the Watering-Place of Rongkuchi. An area of mystic land in the south-eastern part of Garo Hills.

² *Mehgam Miktoram Mande Miktosam* : Literally, the Place where the Mehgam and the Mande used to compare for cubits the lengths of their hands from the elbows to the tips of their middle fingers.

³ *Rawil Racha Rakon Gitel* : Literally, Rawil, the Brave, and Rakon, the Lord. The ancient patriarch of man, who tanned and converted skins of big games into shields.

⁴ *Saminja Rabongga Adil Sinthingram Bigil Rawilram* : Literally, Saminja Rabongga, where horns are converted into *adils* (Garo *uludhans*), and where skins of big animals, such as rhinoceros are cut into rounded shapes (for *danils* i.e. shields).

⁵ *Ahsong Salaram Chiga Mithdeichak* : Literally, the Land of the East and the Watering-Place of Mithdeichak, the Divine Sanctuary. This refers to the ancient Garo settlement in the area

of land, where the modern town of Gauhati and the temple of Kamakhya stand.

⁶ *Ahning Bokjare Chining Domjare Nore Chire* : Literally, Nore Chire, who, as a dweller in the subterranean region, is known as Bokjare and Dimjare, as a denizen of the under-water world. Name of the *chthonic* goddess of rain in the Garo pantheon. ?

⁷ *The Dimbil Bri Phalwang Ahding* : Name of an ancient market-place, famous in many an ancient Garo legend and lore, the site of which is identified as the one still known by the self-same name in the *akhing*-land of Village Baringgiri in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁸ *The land of Gabil* : An area of *akhing*-land by the middle stage of the Manda-Chichura River in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

⁹ *Daram Dasing Rakka Ganda* : A place within the land of Gabil.

¹⁰ "*Ilu-lu-ru-ru-ru, redok, kila kokdok- re-re-redok, dephante sakdok, re-re-redok, kila kokdok, redok, redok, re-redok* : Fancy strain of the sound of the *adil*, as sounded by the blower. Here "*kila kokdok*" means "six basketfuls of cotton-wool," and "*dephante sakdok*" means "six sons." "*Re-redok*" is the side-sound of the *adil* with no meaning.

¹¹ *Mareshu Marebok* : Literally, the All-White Purity. Attributive name of the Supreme Deity in the Garo pantheon. Rurube Kinnase, Kosapak, Kosa pin, Aati Biati, Dakgipa Rugipa, Din-gipa Bahbra, etc., are some of the the other attributive names of this Deity.

MARANG THE MANIFESTATION OF EVIL (PAGES 285—287)

¹ *Rere Machik Bulbul Tira* : Literally, Rere, the Female, and Bulbul, the Maid.

² *Salgra* : Literally, the Divinity, who is All-Light. The Sun-God, with reference to the aspect of Brilliance, represented by the sun in the Garo pantheon.

³ *Drong Meh-a Sandong Phante Mikkang Chijim Khahsot Ting-ring Pongreng Meh-a Pongseng Phante* : Literally, Drong, the Male, Sandong the Bachelor, the Glistening Most-Faced, the Upright-Hearted, Pongreng, the Straightly Long, who is Male, Pongseng, the Straight-Minded, as the Bachelor. The mythological name of the patriarchal head of an Attribute, the renown Personality represented by the Mystic Earthworm.

⁴ *Ahning Bokjare Chining Dimjare Nore Chire* : The ethnic goddess of Rain in the Garo pantheon.

⁵ *Marak Goera Makal Chendora* : Literally, a man of the Marak sept, who is called Makal Chendora.

⁶ *Bone Jahsku Jane Gandophang* : Literally, Bone, who is

only knee-high, and Jane, who is only as high as the lower hem of one's skirt.

⁷ *Matbilrang Sinchirang Wasipa Wakongpa* : Literally, Matbilrang of the family of Sinchi, who is father of Wasi and Wakong.

⁸ *Marak Gitchak Jahpat Botirak* : Literally, One of the Marak sept, whose calf is roundish plump.

⁹ *Konsnara Kondambe* : Literally, a Being who coils himself up into a round heap.

¹⁰ *Bamon Racha Sojon Gitel* : Literally, Bamon the Brave and Sojon the Lord. The patriarchal head of the Brahmins.

ORIGIN OF WEEK-DAYS (PAGE 288)

¹ *The land of Nongchram* : An area of *akhing*-land, with a village of the same name within it, in the north-eastern part of Garo Hills.

² *Dekbik Wari* : The Pool of Dekbik.

³ *The names of week-days* : These weekdays were in actual use by ancient Garos. For them they marked the round of a week. No authentic equivalents of these names of week-days to modern names of week-days can be ascertained. For instance, there is no means of knowing precisely whether *Grisho* means Sunday or Monday or any other day of the week.

ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF MONTHS AND SEASONS (PAGE 288)

¹ *The land of Shohkadam* : An area of *akhing*-land, with a village bearing the same name within it, in the mid-northern part of Garo Hills.

² *The names of months* : The names of the Garo months are derived from the nature of the round of man's activities in *jhum* or shifting cultivation in Garo Hills, as shown below:—

- (i) *Galmakja* is the month of burning down of debris in *jhum* clearings.
- (ii) *Mebakja* is the month of turning up of the earth in previous year's *jhum* fields for sowing of paddy-seeds.
- (iii) *Jagro* is the month of growth of paddy, millet and other cereals in *jhum* fields. It means "a long month," because longing expectation of the fresh fruits of man's labours in the *jhum* fields, out of which no returns have come out as yet, tends to make the month seem for cultivators much longer than others.
- (iv) *Sohgalja* is the month of ritual burning of incense, accompanied by chanting age-old sacrificial songs and solemn offerings of rice-flour, rice-bran and rice-beer out of the first-fruits of the *jhum* fields on the permanent altars at home, before any member of

- the family at home ever tastes of them, to Misi Sal-jong, the God of firmament and of fertility.
- (v) *Jamebok* is the month of ripening of paddy in *jhum*-fields so as to give out white husked-rice.
 - (vi) *Jagapja* (or *Jamegap*) is the month of paddy-harvest on *jhum*-cultivations. *Jagapja* means "*the month of fullness*." It is the busiest month of the year for *jhum* cultivators. The crops in the *jhum*-fields need careful and vigilant watching at nights against depredations of wild pigs, deer, bear and wild elephants, the granaries need renovation or are to be freshly constructed, baskets, mats and other things necessary for storing of paddy and other *jhum* produce must be ready, besides paddy must be harvested and stored within the least possible delay—all within this month.
 - (vii) *Mejaphang* is the month of abandoning the paddy-stalks in the old *jhum*-fields, the harvest being over.
 - (viii) *Ahniya* is the month of selecting places in the jungles for next *jhum*-clearings.
 - (ix) *Berokja* is the month of removing weed and millet-corn-stalks in the previous year's *jhum*-fields so as to convert them into *ahbrengs* (second-staged *jhum*-cultivations).
 - (x) *Khilokja* is the month of picking up of cotton-wool in the *jhum*-fields.
 - (xi) *Ahwitja* is the month of removing debris in the *ahbrengs*, collecting them into heaps and burning them down so as to be ready for sowing of paddy-seeds.
 - (xii) *Wachengja* is the month of drying up or sunning the debris in the fresh *jhum*-clearings.

* *Names of seasons* : The Garo names of seasons, with roughly approximate equivalents in English months, are shown below :—

- (i) *Sinkari* is the cold season or winter for the period as from the fourth week of November to the third week of January.
- (ii) *Bandoni* is the season of dry, dusty and violent gusts of wind for the period as from the fourth week of January to the third week of March.
- (iii) *Palinkari* is the season of putting forth of fresh leaves of plants, herbs, creepers and trees lasting for the period as from the fourth week of March to the third week of May. It is the Spring.
- (iv) *Dingkari* : the warm season or the Summer, which is from the period of the fourth week of May to the third week of July.

- (v) *Wachikari* : the season of rains or the Rainy Season, which is from the period of the fourth week of July to the third week of September.
- (vi) *Ahrakkari* or *Ahrankari* is the dry season for the period as from the third week of September to the third week of November. *Ahrak* means "hardening of earth," *Ahran* means "drying up of the earth" and *Kari* means "season".

The illiterate tribal Garo jhum-cultivators in Garo Hills still use these months and seasons in their unwritten calendar. But, under pressures of a spiv civilisation, most of the literate Garos of the present day have already been more accustomed to the use of English or Bengali calendars.

INEQUALITY IN WEALTH (PAGES 290—292)

¹ *Inda Racha Gangga Nokma* : Literally, Inda, the Brave, Gangga, the Nokma (i.e., Wealthy Lord).

² *Ahning Drong Racha Chining Indong Nokma* : Literally, One, who, as a dweller in the subterranean region, is known as Drong and Indong, the Wealthy Lord, as a denizen of the underwater world. The mythological name of the gigantic water-serpents, known as *Sangkries*.

³ *Ganchengpa Duchengpa* : Literally, One, who is the Father of Ganchen, the first to perform the *Gana* Ceremony, and of Ducheng, the first to feed mouths. Any Garo householder, who performs the *Gana* Ceremony, must needs unstintedly feed the people present in his house on the occasion of performance. Here it refers to the patriarchal head of the earth-cricket, known as *Jongdols*, who is believed to have performed the *Gana* Ceremony first of all.

⁴ *Noro* : Noro is believed by the Garos to be the first human being to inhabit the Earth. Noro is called Noro Mande Demarishi or Noro Mande Demaronchi.

⁵ *Mande* : Literally, the Son of *Man*. (Once the *Man* race was very strong in Burma.) The Garo calls himself *Mande* as distinctly distinguishing himself from the *Rori* (an Alien) or the *Ajong* or *Hajong*. *Ajong* or *Hajong* means the *Earthworm*. The ancient Garo warriors and headhunters thought of the *Roris* or *Ajongs* to be a people who knew nothing of war or fighting with *milams* (two-edged Garo swords) except to plough or turn up the clods of the earth as the earthworms do. *Rori* literally means *Artful* or *Cunning Dodger*. The ancient Garo warriors and head-hunters had found out that the *Roris* were never straightfoward and honest in word and deed. So, except the English and the sister hill-tribes, all the bonafied inhabitants of the plains, who live by plough-cultivation are still known as *Roris* of *Ajongs* as opposed to the *Mande* (or the Garo or Achik).

⁶ *Samegaru* : An area of land, the ancient settlement of the Garos, in the southern bank of Kamrup District, bordering Khasia Hills.

⁷ *Ganga Ahning Dohpa Gisim* : Literally, Ganga, the Black *Bhimraj* of the subterranean world.

⁸ *Misi Saljong* : The Celestial Divinity, who is iconomatically represented by the sun.

⁹ *Susime Singepa* : Literally, Susime the Father of Singe. Name of the male aspect of the Moon-Divinity.

¹⁰ *Salgra Daangpa* : Literally, Salgra the God of Light, the Father of Daang.

¹¹ *Kamal Aepa Ajepa* : Literally, the Mighty Blacksmith, the Armourer of the Gods, who is the Father of Ae and Aje. He is also known as Tuara Matchalang.

¹² *Grim Racha Sangsil Nokma* : Literally, Crim the Brave, who is Sangsil, the Wealthy Lord. The mythological name of the crab.

¹³ *Aminpa Ajalpa* : Literally, the Father of Amin and Ajal.

¹⁴ *Rengcopa Minsepa* : Literally, the Father of Rengco and Minse.

¹⁵ *MesENCHI Soksonchi* : Literally, MesENCHI, who was born last.

¹⁶ *Niba Jonja* : An ancient patriarch, who first obtained *Muni*.

¹⁷ *Solbi Rakke* : The patriarchal head of the *muntjac*.

¹⁸ *Korong Meh-a Kochong Phante* : Literally, Korong, the Male and Kochong, the Bachelor. The patriarchal head of the deer.

¹⁹ *Gingsi Olchok Jahpat Chongsi* : Literally, One with long narrow nostrils, who has slender-calved legs.

The patriarchal head of the *sambhar* deer.

²⁰ *Adil Bri Tekka Ahkang* : Literally, the Hill of Adil, and the Market of Tekka. It is identified to be in the *akhing*-land of Naphak in the mid-northern part of Garo Hills.

²¹ *The Gonga River* : The Garo name for the Ganges River.

²² *Thengte Bandok Mikphil Jahpil* : Literally, Thengte, the Diminutive-Statured, the Oblique-Eyed, with Legs told hind-wise.

²³ *Misi Ajepa* : Literally, the Celestial Being, the Father of Aje.

²⁴ *Saljong Munepa* : Saljong, the Sun-Divinity known as the Father of Mune. Mune is an ancient matriarch of the Garos. She is believed to have been born of human mother, having tacit relations with the physical manifestation of the Sun-Divinity.

²⁵ *Kubera* : In the Garo pantheon, Kubera is the chthonic

divinity of the subterranean world, who guards the treasure-trove lying or buried underground so that no one with immunity could unearth buried wealth.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GARO PHRATRIES (PAGES 293—295)

¹ *Misi* : The Celestial Divinity. Here the narrative refers to Misi Saljong, the Sun-Divinity.

² *Shangma Khudambok* : Literally, Shangma, the Embon-point, with plump mouth.

THE FIRST JHUM CULTIVATION (PAGES 296—298)

¹ *Bone Nirepa Jane Nitepa* : Literally, Bone, the Father of Nire, who is known as June, as the Father of Nite.

² *Shokhadam* : An area of Akhing-land, with a village of the same name within it, in the mid-northern part of Garo Hills.

³ *Nabokmeh-a Namsangphante Raropa Tehtopa Galapa Rakrepa* : Literally, Nambok the Male Namsang the Bachelor, the Father of Raro, Tehto, Gala and Bakre.

⁴ *Sretonggitichak Gitok Wahrikkat* : Literally, One, with Red Tongues, who is Hoarse-Throated. The mythological name for fire.

⁵ *Suri Wakma Sinchikchikma Khoripokma* : Literally, the Hog-Shaped Mother of Snow, the Hoary-Headed Mother of Bit-ing Cold.

⁷ *Denggadare Silkhongkhante Wahrangkolkang Misikokdok Garapetchok* : Literally, the Hill of Misikokdok, the Slanting Land of Garapet by the Fall of Dengga and beside the Hooked-Iron. The name of a hill, 2257 feet high, in the *akhing*-land of Shokhadam in the mid-northern part of Garo Hills. Geologically, there appears to be some mystery about this Hill. The Garo assert that this Hill has never been known to shake during any earthquake, however severe.

THE JACKALS (PAGES 305—307)

¹ *Kakpa Manggisim Dohkapa Sakgisim* : Literally, the Black-Bodied Father of Kak. The patriarchal head of the Crows.

PLACES OF INTEREST (PAGES 308—319)

¹ *Natapani Bagan* : Literally, the Garden of Natapa. Natapa is believed by the Garos to be the first Ghost to settle down on the Balphakram Hill.

² *Atakmeh-a Jongtakphante* : Literally, Atak the liale and Jongthak the Bachelor.

² *The Earthworm* : Here, literally it does not mean the ordinary earthworm that we commonly find in moist land, but

an aquatic serpent, known as *sangknie*s, of enormous size and length.

³ *Rongbinggiri* : An area of *akhing-land*, with a village of the same name within it, in the central eastern portion of Garo Hills.

⁴ *Nokma* : *Nokma* has seven meanings, namely : (i) One who keeps the *akhing-land* of his village on behalf of the *chatchi* or *mahari* to which his wife belongs. Such a *Nokma* is known as *Akhing Nokma*. (ii) One who is wealthy, possessing immense early possessions. Such a *Nokma* is known as *Nokdangni Nokma* or *Gamni Nokma*. (iii) One who has performed the expensive *Gana* Ceremony. Such a *Nokma* is known as *Mithdeini Nokma*. (iv) One, who is hereditarily in the position of a Chieftain or king. Such a *Nokma* is known as *Bahka-paonin Nokma*. (v) One who is appointed a Village-Headman by the Government so that he may help the Government officials in the discharge of their various duties within the village domain. Such a *Nokma* is known as *Sorkarini Nokma*. (vi) One, who for visible manifestations of qualities of heart and head in word or deed, is well-known and respected both by the public in general and by the Government. Such a *Nokma* is known as *Chalang Nokma*. (vii) One, who, for his deep erudition in the divinities, mythological lore and mysterious profundities of creation, is generally looked up to as a visible source of spiritual enlightenment by his own people. Such a *Nokma* is called *Kamal Nokma*.

Here it means Chieftain or King Among Chirepa.

⁵ *Shohkadam Hill* : A Hill, famous in ancient lore and legends of the Garos, in the mid-northern part of Garo Hills.

⁶ *The Chibok Stream* : Literally, the White Stream of Water.

⁷ *Dingrang Bawegiri* : An area of *akhing-land*, with a village bearing the name of Bawegiri, in the mid-eastern part of Garo Hills. The ancient village of Bawegiri was on the right bank of the Chibok River.

⁸ *The akhing* : The form or mode of tenure of the hill-lands in Garo Hills. *Akhing-land* means hereditarily-held or owned by a *charchi* or *mahari* whose members cultivate land and settle in a village within the *akhing-land* and on whose behalf the documents on the *akhing-land* are kept by the *Akhing-Nokma*.

⁹ *Aruak Nokatgiri* : An area of *akhing-land* on the eastern part of the Tura Range in Garo Hills.

¹⁰ *Aruakgiri* : An area of *akhing-land* on the Southern spur of the Tura Range.

¹¹ *Dapsigi* : An area of *akhing-land*, with a village bearing the same name with it, on the southern spur of the eastern extremity of the Dura (Tura) Range.

ERRATA

<i>Pages</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
10	13	Bindergru	Bindengru
11	3	Achik	Achiks
16	31	Explained	exclaimed
18	11	rulling	ruling
23	28	Millam	milam
28	2	on	one
28	8	fort	foot
28	26	far	for
30	23	Mombax	Bombax
		malabaricum	Malabaricum
30	28	Hei-Wao."	Hei-Wao ¹⁰ "
31	8	dohmisal ¹⁰	dohmisal ¹¹
34	32, 35	langur	langurs
40	23	Sammokbrang	Sammikbrang
41	27	harbarium	herbarium
46	11	and	as
46	16	talls	tall
48	27	set	sept
53	11	even	ever
54	1	JINNEE.	JINNEE !
54	3	Hill	Hill?
54	11	trbe	tribe
55	26	Wahsala. ²	Wahsala. ²
55	29	bear ?	Boar ?
56	18	Hill. ²	Hill. ⁴
57	26	Jinnee. ⁴	Jinnee.
62	3	as	was
63	22	vaxation	vexation
64	12	needle	noodle
68	34	Mathis,	Matchis,
68	35	were	on him were
69	6	Soara	Saora
76	23	Imboggipa,	Imbinggipa,
76	24	father	mother
76	27	several	seven
76	32	malabarium)	malabaricum)

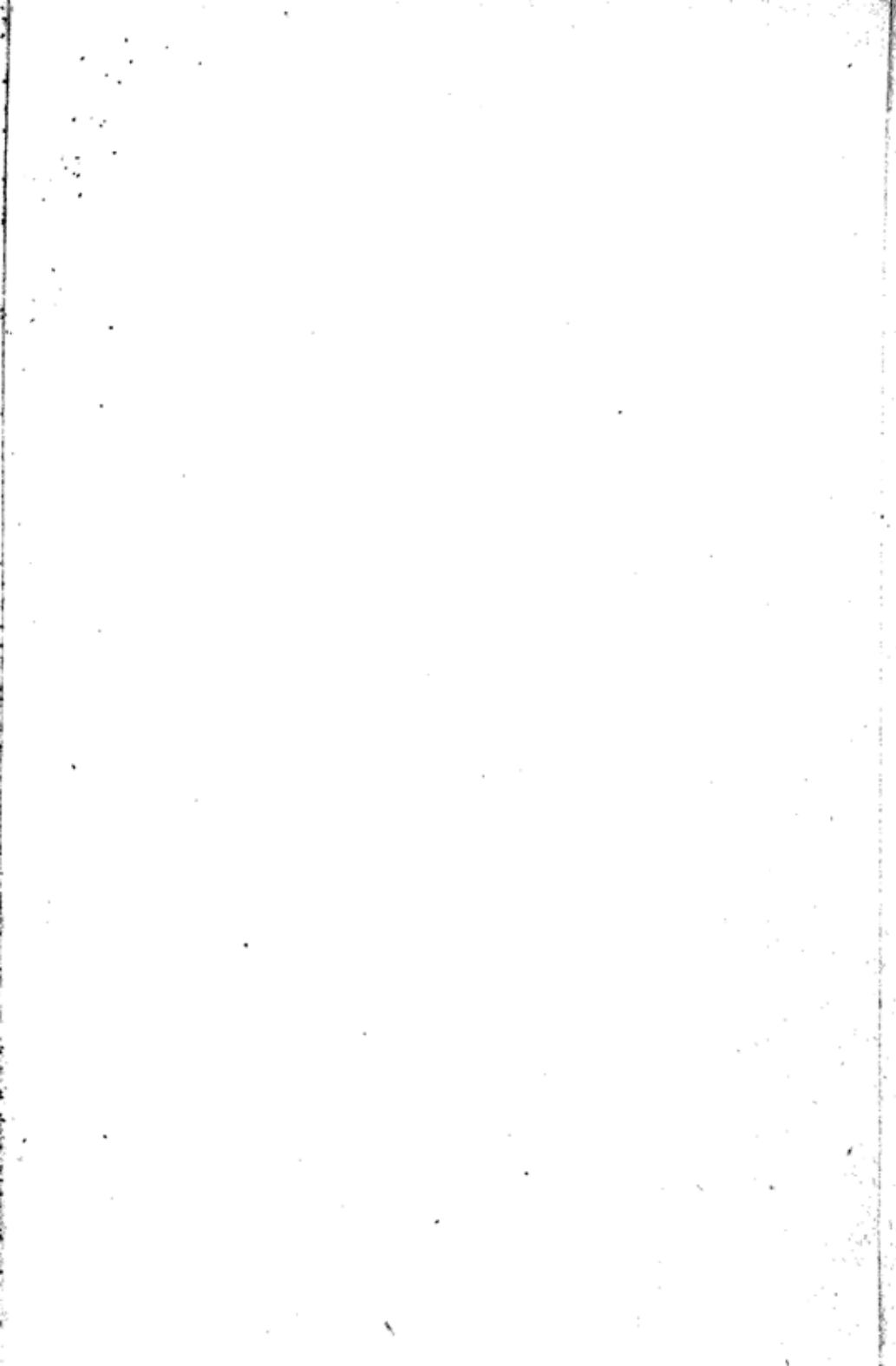
<i>Pages</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
89	5	mother'	mother's
100	1	JERENO,	JERENG,
102	20	jointd	joined
105	22	Gitting.	Gitting. ²
110	5	loving	living
111	6	Giljeps,	Giljepa,
111	8	Ajo	Aje
115	3	Muhgipa Jaring	Mahgipa Jagring
115	30	<i>mudiflora</i>)	<i>nudiflora</i>
123	34	Rongmuthy	Rongmuthu
127	26	Noremsil,	Noresil,
128	3	Bugorik	Bugarik
128	4	Gakjak,	Bakjak,
128	12	Kimhesil,	Kimresil,
128	21	Mahgam	Mehgam
129	34	<i>rehkeksi</i>	<i>rehkoksi</i>
130	5	He	She
130	11	Garo Hills.	Goalpara.
131	4	matrinieal	matrilineal
131	8	Imbaba	Imbama
132	4	pumelo	pomelo
132	29	Durga	Dura
133	13	Wealther.	Weather.
134	14	limbpet	limpet
134	32	an	and
137	9	Kokral	Koknal
139	36	difiance	defiance
140	8	loudly	loudly
143	10	Baka Gonda	Raka Ganda
		Abet Rora	Abet Rora ¹
146	33	Abet,	Abet, ²
152	6	Ohom	Ohom ¹
153	2	Guare.	Guare. ²
153	19	Balonegre	Balongre
154	8	down.	dawn
154	15	Chiganshel-	Chigaahshel-
154	16	Chamegar	Chamegaru
155, 156	30, 6	Meha	Meh-a
155	38	Weenggil	Waonggil
156	8	Noto.	Note.
156	28	it proboscis	its proboscis
156	40	Akhknabel	Akhhuabel
158	12	Nokman	Rokman

<i>Pages</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
160	29	Angkorong Sagalni Damohong.	Angkerong Sagalni Damchong ⁴
160	32	ong,	long,
161	21	Toajeng Apilpeng,	Sajepa Manggolpa Toajeng Apiljeng,
165	1	front	in front
166	6	fer	from
166	22	Kacha	Racha
166	27	Rangsitram.	Rangsitram. ¹
167	17	Gomggret	Gonggrot,
167	31-32	Ahning Doengagrak Chining Doenagrak	Ahning Doenagrak Doenagaja
167	36	Ahguara	Ahguare
168	24	Bhuga	Bhugai
168	27	seed	seeds
168	32-33	Khin-gwangma, ¹⁰	Khing-wangma, ¹⁰
169	1	Chikmang	Chitmang
171	38	Rongkuchu, ⁴	Rongkuchi, ⁴
173	9	Tira	Tira ¹
174	3	Ahsiyam	Ahsim
174	33	bol	bol ⁹
175	23-24	Penthora	Panthora
176	3	Kimrashil	Khimresil
176	3	Noareni	Noarani
176	6	bengera	bongera
184	18	Roksam	Raksam
186	19	Jakarechibak. ²	Jakarechiba ²
188	1	JUINEC	RUINED
188	16	Gaggipak	Ganggipok
193	10	Dekgo	Dekdo
196	27	Totin	Totim
198	6	Dimilbri	Dimbilbri
198	16	Ro'kupa	Do'kupa
198	27	Gaging	Gajing
199	16	Ahabolhol	Ahabolbol
202	39	Chunitolu	Chamtola
204	11	Gontjink	Gongjin
204	12	Durang	Darang
205	4	Ynbanggipa	Imbanggipa
205	5	Janggin	Janggini
205	5	Jamni	Jamani
205	15	Worimjak	Norimjak

[4]

<i>Pages</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
206	12	Rabpgma Ranggama	Rabugama Ranagama
207	10	Salle	Sallo
207	26	hedipped	he dipped
207	29	returner	returned
208	18, 29	Gital, "Gital	Gitel, " Gitel







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